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The Newspaper for Members of the National Education Association

Kids Deserve Better

Congress had a chance to help fix schools. It didn't. Now we have a chance to fix Congress.

See page 4

East Elementary, Lake Forest, Delaware

NEA Today

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If You Want Modern Schools . . .

President's Viewpoint

Try old-fashioned voting on Election Day. It can do a body—and a building—a world of good.

One of the most riveting images unveiled at NEA's "Modern Schools/Better Learning" news conference last January was a photo of the huge open pit in the hallway of East Park Elementary School in Leadville, Colorado.

In the photo, Leadville superintendent Peg Portscheller and several students stare in wonder at the rusted water pipe inside the chasm, covered only by a piece of plywood.

Since January, the pipe has been replaced and the hole filled in. Unfortunately, the repair costs came out of the school's instructional budget.

This story is a constant reminder of continuing Congressional inaction on America's school building crisis.

Like modern-day Neros, a majority of members of Congress focus on empty proposals like "education savings accounts" for parents of private school students, while more than 14 million students attend schools that need major repair or replacement.

America's public schools need at least $200 billion to resolve this national crisis—more than $12 million in tiny Leadville alone. And America's citizens—75 percent of them, according to a bipartisan poll—support a federal role in school modernization.

Since last winter, thousands of NEA members have written or E-mailed their senators and representatives, urging them to support the Public School Modernization Act, which would generate $22 billion in school modernization bonds. That's not nearly enough money to solve the problem, but at least it's a start.

Yet, on two occasions this year, lawmakers voted for tax breaks for private school families instead of modern schools for all children.

Bob Chase

"The school where I teach is 30 years old and in dire need of repairs," writes an Orlando teacher to her U.S. senator. "How will giving a tax break to parents of children in private schools help my students?"

One NEA member from Baton Rouge, Louisiana, told her senator that in her school, "the roofs leak and the rooms get full of mold and mildew. We would think it was appalling if we knew a child lived in these conditions at home, but we think nothing of having them spend six hours a day in such a setting."

> "As we approach the November election, we owe it to our students to support candidates who support their futures."

"I'm in a trailer because we are overcrowded," writes a teacher from his "fairly new" school in North Carolina. "Because our school was built to accommodate 950 students, and there are now 1,400, the wear and tear on our facility is being accelerated. It's like inviting another family to move into your house without adding any bathrooms or bedrooms."

Another NEA member from Marshfield, Wisconsin, after describing her school's deplorable conditions, added this ironic note: "It always amazes me that our businesses are so well-equipped, our government offices are so endowed, while our schools are struggling to come up with the basics."

Congressional inaction plagues other issues of importance to children and public education, too.

While public school critics voice concern about how our students stack up to their counterparts around the world, Congress fails to address the fact that only 27 percent of classrooms—and 14 percent of classrooms in disadvantaged schools—have access to the Internet.

Still, I'm pleased that NEA members continue to write and E-mail our elected leaders, because we know that our active involvement in politics is vital to the future of children and public education in America.

I was proud beyond words late last spring when an NEA-led coalition generated 21,000 E-mail messages to Congress to help turn back an attempt to eliminate the E-Rate.

But the E-rate program—which will provide discounted Internet access and phone service to thousands of schools and libraries—is still being threatened by Congressional critics. All of us in NEA need to be vigilant in its defense.

As we approach the fall election, let's remember who supported children and public education, and who did not. As responsible citizens, we owe it to our students to support candidates who support their futures.

Let's elect people who share our horror at the hole in the floor at East Park Elementary, and who know that every child deserves to learn in a modern public school, with small class sizes and access to technology.

It doesn't matter if they are Republicans or Democrats, friends of children and public education deserve our support—and our votes.

Comments? You can E-mail me directly at BobChase@nea.org.

NEA at a Glance

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Did You Know...
This fall, NEA will be distributing a special CD-ROM designed to help all members new to the classroom survive and thrive. This CD, free for all new NEA members, features a wealth of practical tips and leads to all sorts of professional resources. For more information or to get a copy, contact your NEA state affiliate.

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NEA Today October '98

Counting Heads

If your school seems too small this fall, there's a reason. Enrollments hit record levels for the third year in a row, according to a Department of Education report on the "baby boom echo." This year, 52.7 million students are enrolled in America's elementary and secondary schools—up 500,000 from last year's all-time high. And don't expect relief anytime soon: Experts predict new enrollment records for each of the next eight years. Need any more reason to build and modernize our public schools?

Cover Story

JoAnn Vitelli

4 Kids Deserve Better

Georgia elementary teacher Susan Pierce (above) worries that her students won't get the education they deserve. Some of the middle and high schools they'll attend are old, overcrowded, and unfit for modern technology. So this fall, Pierce will vote for candidates who'll put federal dollars into school repair and renovation. What about you?

Cover photo by Gary Emeigh

Newsmakers

7 On Capitol Hill

Will President Clinton's education funding requests meet the Congressional ax? Your class size may hang in the balance.

8 In the States

Kentucky support employees—led by Dottie Ballard (left), Carol Carman, and others—win historic legislation and respect.

9 Around the World

How are educators—members of Education International—faring around the world? Now that's an international comparison worth making.

10 In Private Hands

■ Facts in hand, Texas NEA members stop their school board from contracting out food services. Here's a success story you can learn from.

11

■ Refusing to give ailing public schools a hand, a Pennsylvania school board votes to use surplus cash to fund private school vouchers. With support from educators, parents sue.

Learning

16 Innovators

Nancy Zimpher (below) advances school renewal and teacher development through a valuable partnership between schools and universities.

18 Students & Strategies

In Vista, California, a math and science magnet attracts ESL students—and repels failure.

21 Inside Scoop

The term is "looping." If you can define it, consider yourself in the loop. If you do it, you may be ahead of the curve.

24 Bits & Bytes

A New Jersey English teacher uses videoconferencing with college mentors to motivate her high school writing students.

27 Rights Watch

Where's the legal line between protecting students from cybersmut and trampling on their First Amendment rights?

Life

39 In the Light Lane

What happened when the "Titanium hit an icebrick"? And what are the "frozen cons" of the issue? Answers—and laughs from the classroom.

40 People

Move over, Steven Spielberg. Indiana teacher Michael Floyd (below) and his students are producing full-length feature films, with all the extras.

42 Money

Kentucky teacher Nancy Tankersley (below) wants to retire before she's 60. Is she ready—financially *and* emotionally? Some expert advice.

Voices

45 My Turn

An educator's life comes full circle, as a teacher battling breast cancer puts her fate in the hands of two former students.

46 Meet

Why should kids listen to a 70-year-old woman who wants to talk about sex? Dr. Ruth has answers in person, online, and in a new book for kids.

47 Debate

Should school buses be equipped with seat belts? Two bus drivers face off on this life-and-death issue.

49 Books

Boys—held back, in detention, on Ritalin, in jail—in crisis? Check out the new books about raising and educating boys.

50 Letters

NEA executive member Lily Eskelsen explains why she's running for Congress. Plus your reactions to the September issue of *NEA Today*.

My Students Deser

About 15 million students attend schools unfit for quality learning. This November, will you remember?

Susan Pierce counts herself as lucky. The school where she teaches, Armuchee Elementary, is just five years old. The classrooms are modern and well-equipped. There's no better school in all of Floyd County in northwest Georgia.

And that, unfortunately, is the problem—and the reason why Susan Pierce's students aren't nearly as lucky as their teacher. The county schools most of them will attend, after Armuchee Elementary, are old and overcrowded.

One of Floyd County's middle schools, for instance, is 45 years old, and space is incredibly tight. Education activists believe it should have been replaced years ago.

At the high school level, the story is not much better. Many of the county's high school students spend part of every day in portable classrooms.

Susan Pierce's Floyd County students, sadly, face harsh school building realities that are in no way atypical, either in Georgia or in the United States as a whole.

In Georgia, one out of every four schools has a crumbling roof (for nationwide figures, see page 6), according to statistics compiled by the U.S. General Accounting Office. Nearly four out of 10 lack enough power outlets and wiring to accommodate computers in the classroom.

Overall, nearly three out of every five schools in the United States have at least one major building feature in disrepair, says the American Society of Civil Engineers.

Last March, these engineers analyzed and graded every element of America's basic social infrastructure, from wastewater systems and roads to mass transit and bridges. They gave only one infrastructure element a grade of *F*: America's schools.

Susan Pierce would like to see all the old and outdated school buildings in Floyd County renovated before her current students leave Armuchee Elementary. But there are no plans afoot to make these speedy renovations. The district simply doesn't have the money.

That's why Pierce's ears perked up last April when she heard about legislation pending in Congress designed to help school districts just like hers. The legislation, the NEA-backed Public School Modernization Act, would have set aside 22 billion federal dollars for zero-interest school modernization bonds.

Of that $22 billion, nearly $500 million would have been set aside for school districts in Georgia.

That sounded like a great idea to Pierce. So she did what all good American citizens are supposed to do. She contacted Congress and urged her senator, Paul Coverdell, to support the Public School Modernization Act.

Pierce wasn't alone. Late last spring, all across America, NEA members wrote, called, and E-mailed their representatives and senators on Capitol Hill to urge support for the School Modernization Act. Some members of Congress listened. Others like Senator Coverdell from Georgia didn't.

In fact, Coverdell was far more interested in creating tax breaks for private school tuition than modernizing public schools. He spent his spring pushing an "education savings account" proposal that would have meant tens of millions of dollars in tax savings for wealthy families with kids in private school.

On April 21, about a week after Susan Pierce urged Senator Coverdell to help modernize schools like hers, the Senate took its first key vote on the NEA-backed school modernization legislation.

JoAnn Vitelli

Many high school students in Susan Pierce's county attend classes in portables. Yet her senator, Paul Coverdell, voted against federal aid for local school modernization.

ve Better!

The vote came on an amendment that Senator Carol Moseley-Braun from Illinois introduced on Coverdell's bill to subsidize private schools. Moseley-Braun's bill would have axed the private school subsidies and added $22 billion for public school modernization.

Coverdell and his Senate allies moved to table the Moseley-Braun amendment. Their motion passed, by a 56-42 margin, and school modernization was defeated.

A month later, the Senate school-modernizers tried again. Senator Moseley-Braun tried to add onto a budget bill an amendment that would have provided just $5 billion to help schools modernize old buildings.

Senator Coverdell voted no, as did a majority of his Senate colleagues.

The immediate result of that vote? No federal help this year for modernizing the schools in Floyd County, Georgia. And that, says Susan Pierce, means more years of lost learning opportunities.

"My senator, Paul Coverdell, feels it's more important to fund private schools with public funds than to improve public schools," says Pierce. "That's scary."

The good news? Pierce's senator is up for election this fall, as are many of his colleagues who'd rather subsidize private schools than help public schools modernize.

"Right now," points out Dale Lestina, NEA's top lobbyist on Capitol Hill, "the crowd that wants to funnel tax dollars into private schools actually has a majority in Congress. If it weren't for the Presidential veto power, they'd have their way."

But Presidential vetoes, Lestina points out, can't pass good legislation like the Public School Modernization Act. Vetoes can only stop bad legislation.

"That's why it's so important for NEA members to cast informed ballots this November," says Lestina. "We need to let lawmakers like Senator Coverdell know that we're watching—and voting."

> "My senator, Paul Coverdell, feels it's more important to fund private schools with public funds than to improve public schools. That's scary."

Earlier this year, NEA members the nation over bombarded Congress with thousands of E-mail messages urging support for school modernization. Here's a sampling.

Dear Senator Faircloth:
It has come to my attention that the Senate has an important decision to make about public education. I wholeheartedly support funds being given to the public schools to repair or replace outdated schools here in North Carolina.
I am a public school teacher with almost 20 years experience, most of which has been spent in buildings with leaky roofs, outdated plumbing and wiring, and enough roaches to start our own zoo.
It really is not fair to ignore the needs of public school children and give yet another tax break to the people who already have enough money to buy an expensive, exclusive education.
Please vote the morally right way. Give the funding to the people who truly need it—our public school students.

Sharon Midgette
Garner, North Carolina

Dear Senator Landrieu:
Please vote to help us replace and repair outdated schools instead of giving public money as tax breaks to private schools! The buildings in this area are all 20 years old.
The roofs leak, and the rooms get full of mold and mildew. We would be appalled if we knew a child lived in these conditions at home, but we think nothing of having them spend six hours a day in such a setting.

Janet Stevens
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Dear Senator Graham:
I currently teach at an inner-city school in the Orange County public school system. I know first-hand how badly our schools need improvements or need to be replaced.
The school where I teach is 30 years old and in dire need of repairs, books, computers, furniture, and many other things. The air quality in my school is horrible, and the children are always sick. In my classroom, I have a broken bookcase and several broken chairs and tables. I only have two student computers, and my smallest class has 31 students.
If improvements were made to public schools, all of our children would benefit, not just the children of the wealthy. How will giving a tax break to parents of children in private schools help my students?

Judith Myers
Orlando, Florida

Dear Senator Campbell:
Many of our schools are falling apart. Too many of our students learn in subpar schools that lack the capability to access state-of-the-art technology. Our children need your help to keep pace in a world that's moving ahead very quickly.
Please support federal funds for school modernization and oppose the Coverdell private school tuition tax subsidy. Our future rests on the success of our public schools, which have built our great nation.

Salvatore Montalto
Colorado Springs, Colorado

Of the above four Senators, two—Senator Landrieu from Louisiana and Senator Graham from Florida—voted consistently for federal aid for school modernization.

Sick of Slick Political Ads?

Here's a resource that can help you find out which candidates really measure up for education.

Okay. You're ready to cast a vote for education this November. But who do you vote for? Almost every candidate running this fall for Congress, after all, is running ads proclaiming eternal, heart-felt support for quality schools.

How can you tell who's really for kids and who's just kidding? How can you figure out which candidates really measure up for education?

NEA legislative analysts have been working hard to assemble the information you need to make an informed decision. You can access that information directly by checking the World Wide Web at www.nea.org/lac/voterec.

This special Web area makes it easy to see how members of Congress measure up on four key issue areas that really impact how well schools work and students learn.

The four issue categories: protecting children's health and safety, preparing students for America's jobs of the future, strengthening public education, and respecting the rights of the men and women who work in education.

If you don't have Web access, check your NEA local or state affiliate for information on which candidates for Congress truly measure up.

As Schools Crumble, Congress Waffles

Carol Moseley-Braun (D-Ill) has been one of the Senate's leading voices in the fight for resources to repair and modernize America's public schools. Last November, she introduced legislation that would distribute substantial federal aid to school districts for school building repair and renovation.

The U.S. General Accounting Office studied the condition of America's schools—at your request. What did it find?

It was startling. The GAO found nearly 15 million students attend schools that need to be extensively repaired or replaced, and 7 million of our children attend schools with life safety code violations. The GAO says it will cost $112 billion to upgrade our school buildings to good and safe conditions.

You've seen a lot of school buildings that need repair.

I saw a school in southern Illinois that sent its students to the local prison for track practice, because the prison had better facilities than the school. The parents ultimately vetoed the arrangement. I've have also seen more leaky roofs and peeling paint than I care to remember. Some schools I've visited are so crowded that stairway landings have been converted to computer labs, and study halls are literally being held in hallways.

Congress pays to fix the nation's highways. Does Congress also have a responsibility to help fix our schools?

Of course we do. In one of his State of the Union Addresses, President Clinton said education is a "critical national security issue for our future." That's absolutely right, and we need an education partnership that reflects this sentiment.

Let me give you an example. When President Eisenhower created the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways, he did so because good roads were deemed essential to our national security. School should be held in the same regard.

The federal government has a long history of investing in infrastructure while preserving local decision-making authority. We do it with roads, bridges, mass transit systems, clean water facilities, and other types of infrastructure deemed essential. I believe our education system is just as important to a healthy America in the 21st century as any road, bridge, or mass transit system.

How much federal support for school construction and modernization is needed?

According to the Department of Education, we need to build 6,000 new schools over the next 10 years just to keep up with rising enrollment.

I've seen estimates that it would cost $70 billion to build these new schools. When you add the costs of modernizing schools for technology, the total price tag can approach $200 billion.

That seems like an unfathomable amount of money, but remember we just committed about $216 billion in federal funding for roads and transit systems over the next six years.

The plan I introduced this year would make available $22 billion in interest-free bonds over the next two years for school districts and states to modernize schools. Individuals and organizations who purchase these special bonds would receive federal income tax credits every year in lieu of interest payments. The plan would cost the federal government only about $3.3 billion over five years.

What are the bill's chances?

There's so much public support behind this issue now I think Congress will have to pass the plan in the near future. According to a recent poll, three-fourths of the country would support a major federal effort to rebuild and modernize our schools. NEA can take a lot of credit for building this public support.

When I first started talking about this issue more than four years ago, I was all alone. No one cosponsored my original legislation in 1994, which was a simple grant program.

Even President Clinton admits now that he didn't support my original calls for a federal role in school reconstruction. But he came around.

Now the President is fully committed to this initiative. He has mentioned it in his last two State of the Union addresses and has included it in his budget requests to the Congress. More than 40 percent of the Senate consistently votes our way—and we only need 50 percent to pass the bill.

What can NEA members do to build momentum for the bill?

All NEA members should contact their Senators and members of Congress. Every member of Congress should have stacks of mail from constituents asking for their support of a national effort to rebuild and modernize our school facilities.

NEA members should contact their governors, mayors, and local school board members and make sure they know there is a movement afoot to provide federal support to state and local school improvement efforts.

Finally, NEA members should work with parents, school superintendents, and administrators on this issue. Everyone needs to work together to develop the national climate of opinion we need to pass this initiative.

Resources

- The NEA school modernization Web page: www.nea.org/lac/modern.
- What school construction initiatives would your state fund if the Public Schools Modernization Act passes? Find out at www.ed.gov/inits/construction/distrib.html.
- Six reports on the building needs of America's schools are now available at www.gao.gov: *School Facilities: Condition of America's Schools* (HEHS-95-61); *School Facilities: America's Schools Not Designed or Equipped for 21st Century* (HEHS-95-95); *Technology: America's Schools Not Designed or Equipped for 21st Century* (T-HEHS-95-127); *School Facilities: States' Financial and Technical Support Varies* (HEHS-96-27); *School Facilities: Accessibility for the Disabled Still an Issue* (HEHS-96-73,); and *School Facilities: America's Schools Report Differing Conditions* (HEHS-96-103). To order print copies, call 202/512-6000.
- The American Society of Civil Engineers report on the status of the nation's basic infrastructure—from roads to bridges to dams—says schools don't make the grade. Check it out on the Web at www.asce.com.

State by State

How bad off are the nation's schools and how might the federal government help make them better? Check the chart below for the percentage of schools in each state that have crumbling roofs. Next to that, the amount of money each state would have received from the federal government if the Public School Modernization Act had passed last spring.

State	% of schools reporting crumbling roofs	$ in aid received had Pub. Sch. Mod. Act passed
Figures in millions		
Alabama	30%	$ 338
Alaska	33	$ 44
Arizona	30	$ 311
Arkansas	22	$ 178
California	40	$2,658
Colorado	26	$ 196
Connecticut	32	$ 237
Delaware	36	$ 45
D. C.	67	$ 85
Florida	23	$1,197
Georgia	24	$ 562
Hawaii	16	$ 50
Idaho	31	$ 53
Illinois	23	$1,048
Indiana	15	$ 326
Iowa	7	$ 126
Kansas	28	$ 151
Kentucky	34	$ 331
Louisiana	28	$ 543
Maine	38	$ 75
Maryland	33	$ 351
Massachusetts	41	$ 418
Michigan	20	$ 994
Minnesota	62	$ 260
Mississippi	27	$ 306
Missouri	20	$ 368
Montana	19	$ 63
Nebraska	20	$ 93
Nevada	18	$ 82
New Hampshire	20	$ 45
New Jersey	25	$ 485
New Mexico	29	$ 174
New York	31	$2,461
North Carolina	25	$ 359
North Dakota	19	$ 45
Ohio	33	$ 912
Oklahoma	26	$ 241
Oregon	36	$ 186
Pennyslvania	19	$ 994
Puerto Rico	n/a	$ 615
Rhode Island	23	$ 83
South Carolina	28	$ 238
South Dakota	26	$ 46
Tennessee	22	$ 389
Texas	23	$1,885
Utah	32	$ 81
Vermont	21	$ 44
Virginia	32	$ 311
Washington	32	$ 285
West Virginia	26	$ 173
Wisconsin	18	$ 387
Wyoming	24	$ 41

Sources: U.S. General Accounting Office, U.S. Department of Education

On Capitol Hill

What's That About a Surplus?

It'll take more than grants to help at-risk students. That's why this NEA member wrote to Congress.

It's a shame that talented writer Sharon Schwartz, an English teacher at Salisbury Middle School in Pennsylvania, is enjoying her first *NEA Today* review for something other than a novel or short story.

Schwartz's sharpest writing in recent days has appeared on applications for grants to sustain vital programs—and E-mail messages to her members of Congress urging opposition to cuts in education funding.

Her plea to lawmakers: Even middle-class districts like Salisbury need added financial aid to deal with a large increase of students with learning and emotional problems.

Just to keep up, Schwartz says teachers "need more training on how to handle inclusion, a much lower teacher-student ratio, trained aides in classrooms, and more support from social workers and psychologists."

Through her grant-writing skills, Schwartz has boosted funding for two projects for at-risk kids—a weekly after-school program and an Instructional Support Team (IST) that helps students stay in general ed classes.

The IST provides thorough student assessment, advice for teachers, structured study halls, stepped-up parental involvement, and mentoring by community volunteers.

But, for all of the IST's gains, says instructional support teacher Linda Waddell, "We ask from one year to the next if the district will keep it going."

But think about this: The Congressional Budget Office projects a federal budget surplus of more than $80 billion in Fiscal Year 1999 and more than $1.6 *trillion* over the next decade.

Some of that spare cash will be spent on public education. Right?

Think again. At *NEA Today* presstime, the House Appropriations Committee approved a bill that slashes $2 billion from President Clinton's education funding requests—for after-school learning centers, education technology, reading and math instruction for disadvantaged kids, and more.

The same bill cuts the Eisenhower professional development program by $50 million, turning it into a block grant without quality controls.

Moreover, Congress has rejected separate bills funding NEA priorities like school modernization and the hiring of 100,000 new teachers.

Still, there are these signs of hope:

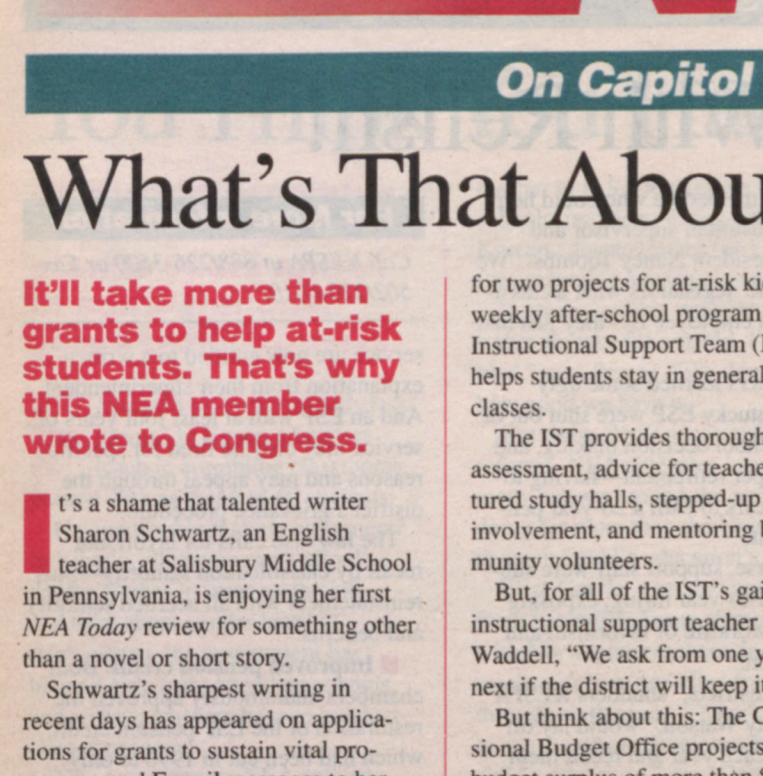
■ **The education community is more united than ever.** In a recent joint letter to Congress, leaders of 61 member organizations of the nonpartisan Committee for Education Funding—including school and college administrator groups, NEA, and the publishers' association—called for an "immediate, substantial, and sustained federal investment in education" in light of the budget surplus.

■ **Education advocates have beaten worse odds before.** When some in Congress last attempted to gut education spending by $3.7 billion in 1996, NEA members, parents, and the public pressured them to back off. Congress then passed a $3.5 billion increase for schools—the biggest ever. This year, President Clinton vows to veto any education appropriations bill that fails to invest in kids and schools.

■ **You can make a difference.** Urge your members of Congress to approve a 15 percent increase for education programs—for everything from class size reduction to professional development—and cite the specific needs of your school or district (see box below).

"There's too much complaining in faculty rooms and not enough talking to people who make the decisions," Schwartz says.

"I've gained more respect from administrators and parents for speaking out on students' needs—and so will other educators."



Catherine Meredith

"The truth is," says NEA member Sharon Schwartz, "no district can afford to provide enough services to all the students who need help beyond the regular classroom." Federal funds, she tells legislators, would be a start.

What You Can Do

NEA's online Legislative Action Center (www.nea.org/lac) gives you the tools you need to lobby both state and federal lawmakers—including the ability to quickly send them E-mail.

Another tip: Join NEA's network of cyber-lobbyists for children and public education. Here's how:

1. Point your Web browser to http://congress.nw.dc.us/nea.
2. Click on "Join Our Action List".
3. Enter your name, home address, and personal E-mail address in the space provided.
4. Click on "Submit registration."

Once registered, you'll receive regular updates about legislation that impacts your students and school, plus opportunities to lobby Congress.

Heroes & Zeroes

Even before the St. Louis Cardinals' Mark McGwire started breaking home run records, he was breaking records for kindness to kids. The day he signed a $30 million contract, McGwire pledged $3 million to help abused children. "I've accepted this as my gift," says McGwire of his slugging. "What I'm doing for kids may turn out to be my other gift."

AP/Wide World

A tuna sandwich is about the only thing Georgia teachers ever pack for school. But state Rep. Mitchell Kaye wants to legislate their right to pack concealed firearms, too. Not a good idea, says Essie Stewart Johnson, president of the Georgia Association of Educators. "Our classrooms are *not* the wild, wild west, and teachers are not law enforcement officers—we are there to teach the children."

Good Will Hunting stars Matt Damon and Ben Affleck rushed autographed pix to their alma mater, the public Cambridge (Massachusetts) Rindge and Latin School, when a donor offered to give the school $10,000 in exchange. NEA members at the school must have taught these two gentlemen well.

AP/Wide World

The New York City Partnership, which rewards educators for improved student test scores, has announced its bonus schedule: $1,000 a year for teachers, $5,500 for principals, and $11,800 for superintendents. Now repeat: "I *am* somebody, I *am* some. . ."

Talk about precious metal. Old aluminum cans—35,641 pounds of 'em—have earned new equipment for Simpson Elementary in Bridgeport, West Virginia, and needed cash for school materials, the city park, and the Ronald McDonald House. The Metal of Honor winner behind it all: fourth grade teacher Carole Wright Kinard, who runs a program to teach kids "about recycling and how to give to others in the community."

In the States

We Couldn't Say It Better
Kentucky Educational Support Personnel Association (KESPA) members have given state legislators quite an education (see story, right). Here's what several lawmakers learned about their ESP constituents:

- **Sen. Kim Nelson:** "I have never worked with a group lobbying effort any stronger than the one led by the KESPA team."
- **Rep. Charlie Miller:** "Classified people have been overlooked for so many years. They're the keys to our schools and communities, and I think it's about time we looked at them."
- **Rep. Susan Johns:** "Classified people have been one of the finest groups up here lobbying. I appreciate people who come to Frankfort for a cause and leave here with a bill."

And Envelopes, Too
Even without a collective bargaining law, KESPA has negotiated in school districts where it has strong membership—and achieved impressive results.

The gains include salary schedules, sick leave banks, detailed policies for Hopkins County bus drivers, and a fair, seniority-based layoff procedure for ESP in many Kentucky districts.

But, in *unorganized* Kentucky districts, support staff "have no rights and don't even receive their paychecks in envelopes," says Breckinridge County KESPA President Dottie Ballard.

"Our checks come in envelopes sealed with tape," Ballard boasts. "We have a voice in our working conditions and a very good relationship with our superintendent."

Justice in New Hampshire
In a victory for NEA-New Hampshire, Governor Jeanne Shaheen has vetoed legislation banning negotiation of teacher contract language on arbitration and termination for just cause. In its place, Shaheen has established a committee to examine teacher evaluation systems and the process for terminating unsuccessful teachers.

To Frankfort, With Relish!

Kentucky ESP win groundbreaking legislation and respect from lawmakers.

When she wasn't pointing her school bus down the roads of Breckinridge County, Kentucky, driver Dottie Ballard spent last winter and spring pointing her Web browser down the information highway to Frankfort, her state capital.

Between bus runs, this NEA local leader used her computer to scour the state Legislative Research Commission's home page for items pertaining to educational support personnel—including newly introduced bills, amendments, and committee action.

When Ballard uncovered new legislation, she tipped off state leaders of the Kentucky Educational Support Personnel Association (KESPA). And to corroborate research, she regularly compared notes with fellow cyber-activist Carol Carman, a newly retired school secretary-bookkeeper.

Until this year, Carman, a rookie member of KESPA's Legislative Committee, had "no idea how much it takes to pass a bill—all the committees it has to go through."

But Carman and Ballard, along with 3,000 other KESPA members, got a crash course in civics by the time Kentucky's legislature wrapped up its biennial session in April. Their graduation present: historic legislation boosting ESP rights and benefits.

Through an intensive grassroots lobbying campaign—involving everything from phone calling to packing committee chambers—KESPA members gained real respect in Frankfort (see sidebar).

"We learned we had to re-educate the people who could help us," says custodial supervisor and KESPA President Nancy Toombs. "We explained to legislators what a classified school employee is—they just had *no* idea."

Lawmakers learned some ugly truths. Kentucky ESP were shut out of statutes, school decision making, and even a proper retirement—having to work 37 years to earn a 26-year pension benefit.

And worse, support staff were subject to year-to-year hiring, exposing them to a worklife of favoritism and intimidation.

"Many districts," shudders KESPA staffer Betty Watson, "would lay off their ESP each year and recall them immediately—without accrued seniority or benefits."

But thanks to KESPA member initiative, some 42,000 Kentucky ESP now enjoy legislation guaranteeing:

- **Increased job security.** The state House and Senate *unanimously* passed a bill mandating renewal of ESP contracts by April 30 of each year. Non-renewed employees with less than four years of service are now entitled to a written explanation from their superintendent. And an ESP with at least four years of service may only be fired for specific reasons and may appeal through the district's grievance procedure.

The law also calls for layoff and recall by classification seniority—plus reinstatement with all accrued seniority and benefits.

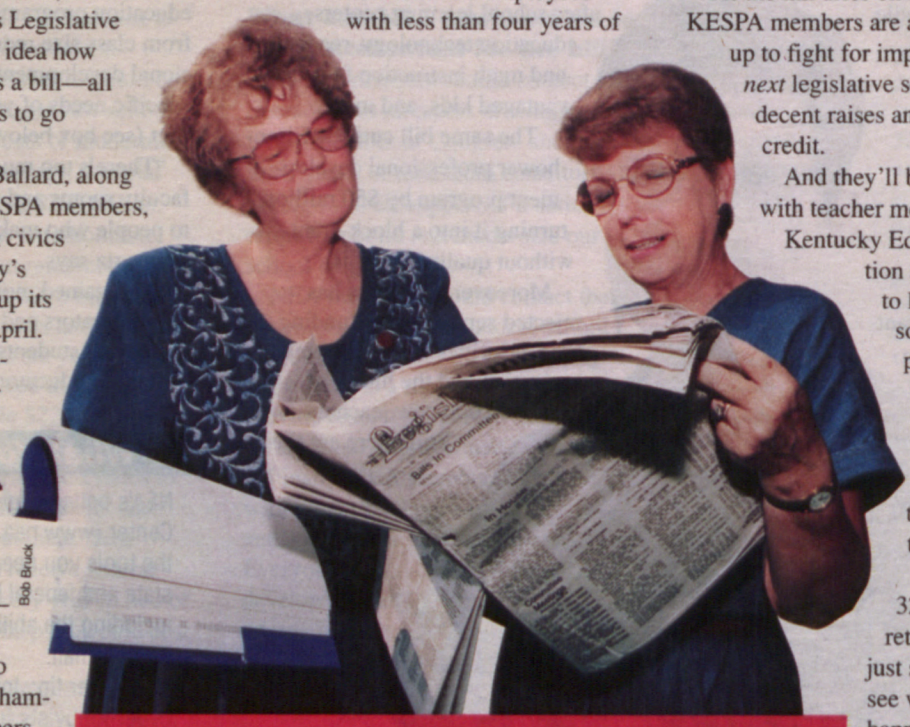
- **Improved pension credit.** Both chambers unanimously approved the restoration of the ESP pension credit, which had been cut in 1996 to only nine months per year. Teachers who worked the same amount of time got a full year's worth of pension credit.
- **Recognition of ESP.** Lawmakers approved the election of ESP reps to superintendent candidate-screening committees, plus ESP inclusion in provisions of the state Safe Schools Act and public employee rule book.

As the ink dries on these new laws, KESPA members are already gearing up to fight for improvements in the *next* legislative session, like decent raises and more pension credit.

And they'll be collaborating with teacher members of the Kentucky Education Association and other unions to lobby for a sorely needed public employee bargaining law.

Rest assured, Carol Carman will be right in there, scrolling through bills.

"Each year, for 32 years," this retiree admits, "I just sat and waited to see what would happen in Frankfort. This time, I got involved and made a *difference*."



Bob Bruck

Kentucky bus driver Dottie Ballard (left) and retired school secretary Carol Carman drove the information highway to monitor state legislation affecting ESP.

For More Information

Call KESPA at 888/226-3500 or Fax 502/226-6010.

The Bottom Line

Test success: Minority student test scores on ACT college entrance exams are up again. The test scores for all students remained steady, a positive result since the total number of students taking the ACT—about a million—was higher than last year.

Housing: The number of low-income families that can't find affordable apartments has increased by 1 million since 1991, says the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Over 5 million low-income households pay over 50 percent of their income in rent.

Aloft alone: The nation's airlines are reporting steep increases in the number of young children flying without an adult. Northwest and Delta have raised the connecting-flight charge for supervising "unaccompanied minors" to $120 above the regular ticket price.

Substitutes: Shortages of substitute teachers have become so severe that some districts now only require substitutes to have a high school diploma. In Kentucky, for instance, five districts will be allowed to hire substitutes with no college credentials this year.

Around the World

You Think You Had It Rough!

At a world assembly of educators, America stands years ahead of some nations, years behind others.

Frustrated by overcrowded classrooms? In Egypt, educators teach in crumbling classrooms, packed with as many as 60 students.

Having trouble making ends meet? In Liberia, educators can't afford decent clothes to wear on the job.

Angry about gender bias? In Afghanistan, the government has banned girls from attending schools, and women teachers have to conduct classes in secret.

This past summer, NEA activists from around the country heard stories like these first-hand at the biggest assembly of world educators ever held.

The gathering, the Second World Congress of the Education International, drew over 1,100 educators to Washington, D.C., in July for five days of sobering—and sometimes inspiring—dialogue and debate.

NEA helped found the Education International in 1993. The ranks of EI affiliates now include 284 educator unions from 150 countries. Most of those unions were represented at the World Congress by their top leadership.

But some top leaders—like Taye Woldesmiate, president of the Ethiopian Teachers Association—couldn't attend. A political prisoner since 1996, Woldesmiate is jailed in a cell without natural light. His deputy was assassinated in 1997, shot in the back. The authorities said he was "resisting arrest."

Other courageous educators were able to attend. Sheridan Pearce, a math teacher in U.S. Department of Defense schools, met one—Dong-Jin Lee, a Korean educator jailed for 17 months for organizing a teachers union.

"Listening to his struggles for the rights we take for granted, I'm humbled," says Pearce. "We don't know how good we have it."

But rights don't necessarily foster reforms. NEA delegates learned that many nations around the world are doing far more than the United States to extend public education's horizons.

Eliza Garcia, a second grade teacher from Kingville, Texas, compared notes with Norwegian teachers. In Norway, teachers follow one class from first through sixth grade. "They're trained to see the whole development of a child's education," says Garcia.

Norway also offers public schooling for children under five, learned North Carolina teacher Geraldine McNeill. Each classroom has a teacher and a nurse—and no more than 10 students.

Susan Roushey, an NEA activist from Delaware, explored the ins and outs of Danish education at the World Congress. In Denmark, teachers have 32 minutes of planning for each 45-minute lesson with students.

At William Penn High School here in the United States, Roushey currently teaches five periods a day, has a duty assignment for one period, and one period of planning.

"If I were in Denmark," she explains, "I would teach three periods, have three periods of planning, and one duty period."

Roushey would like to see innovative approaches to education like Denmark's exported around the world. And she had plenty of company at the World Congress.

Delegates were eager to share with and learn from each other—whether talking about a new defunding scheme, a tip on fighting privatization, or advice on how to make multi-age classes work.

Solving education's worldwide problems, Missouri teacher Chris Guinther notes, demands worldwide cooperation.

"Thanks to the Education International and meetings like this one," Guinther adds, "we're starting to make those cooperative connections."

Sandy Schaeffer

To get kids into school, educator Shantha Sinha, from India, first has to liberate them from the exploitation of child labor.

For More Information

To find out more about the work of the Education International, the world organization of educators that NEA helped found five years ago, point your Web browser to www.ei-ie.org.

World Leaders
Former NEA President Mary Hatwood Futrell will be continuing as president of the Education International. Delegates at this July's Second World Congress of the EI re-elected both Futrell and EI General Secretary Fred van Leeuwen from the Netherlands.

Over the past three years, Futrell and van Leeuwen have worked particularly hard at pushing the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the world's two most powerful aid agencies, to recognize the primacy of education to healthy, sustainable economic growth.

In recent years, aid agencies have demanded that nations balance their budgets by cutting spending for education and other social services—or risk losing international aid.

"The mission of education," Futrell told World Congress delegates, "must be measured by the needs of children and never the greed of nations."

Getting Warm Up North
It's education reform in reverse.

In Canada, the Ontario provincial government has increased teacher time in the classroom by 25 percent by slashing prep time and ditched negotiated class size caps in favor of districtwide "averages."

It gets worse. Under Bill 160, Ontario's Conservative government has stripped school boards of most powers, confined per-pupil funding to ultra-narrow "classroom expenditures," and scrapped teachers' right to bargain over working conditions.

As the new school year began, many of the province's K-12 teachers faced unilateral changes in their terms and conditions of employment—even new, "first" contracts.

That's why as early as last June, educators in 31 of Ontario's 72 districts had authorized fall strikes.

Not an idle threat. Last autumn, 126,000 members of five unions affiliated with the Ontario Teachers' Federation protested Bill 160 with a 10-day walkout. For updates, go to www.osstf.on.ca/.

A holiday for helping: The island nation of Fiji annually celebrates a National Youth Day. As part of the observance, students of all ages take time out from their schoolwork to help serve the underprivileged in their communities.

Not ready for computers: The online world may now reach into nearly every American community, but the world community's a far different story. Believe it or not, 40 percent of the world's children currently live without electricity.

Child labor: Around the world, some 200 million children work in industries that exploit them. Of the world's 2 billion kids under the age of 15, 130 million have absolutely no access to schooling.

Unprofessional realities: Some 15 million teachers around the world, the Education International reports, don't earn enough to top their nation's poverty line. And about a third of the globe's teachers have never been trained to teach.

In Private Hands

What, *More* From Texas?
By a 6-0 vote, school board members in Midland, Texas, decided earlier this year not to contract out transportation services. There was little choice—they were flooded with irate phone calls from citizens and bus drivers, alike. Behind the scenes, members of the Midland Educators Association waged a community campaign. They raised serious, credible concerns about children's safety, job security, retirement, and quality control.

Man of Note in Michigan
Don't slip up around maintenance worker Don Wertz. He takes notes.

For 18 years, the NEA activist has detailed every aspect of Laidlaw Inc.'s management of school district transportation in Van Buren, Michigan—especially the firm's weaknesses and mistakes.

Wertz's dogged persistence finally forced the superintendent and school board to do a thorough review of Laidlaw's performance.

Its conclusion: The district can provide all transportation services cheaper than Laidlaw, even while paying into the state retirement system and the Michigan Education Association's top-notch health plan.

In the spring, the Van Buren school board voted 5-2 to discontinue Laidlaw's contract—and bring transportation back in-house.

Say 'Hi' for Security
In New Jersey, the 600-member Linden Education Association has helped elect an anti-privatization majority to the school board. One member: a maintenance supervisor who works for a district that brought custodial work back in-house, following thefts by private cleaning firm employees.

But LEA doesn't rely on politics alone to keep out privatizers. Local grievance chair Max Bergdoll says LEA urges elementary custodians to "always say hello to parents dropping off kids at school." It's a way to remind adults of the security that career ESP—who are often local residents—offer kids every day.

Staying Ahead of the Game

Texas NEA members stop food service privatization before it starts.

Sam Pierson

Texas bus driver Lottie Thacker helped fight local privatization efforts with research and education—and won.

There are times when you're reminded that you need to be just as united as your administrators—like when a gaggle of 'em attend a public meeting on school privatization and record every word uttered by a teacher or a bus driver.

In this unfriendly fashion, central office officials in Conroe, Texas, chaperoned a "town hall meeting" held last fall on the district's plans to contract out food services.

The note-taking supervisors didn't rattle leaders of the 1,000-member Conroe Education Association. In calm, professional fashion, they ran a well-attended Saturday morning panel discussion, which fairly presented both sides of the privatization debate.

The talk was helpful, but research eventually carried the day. CEA's compilation of contracting-out horror stories from districts across Texas and the nation, backed by privatization data from NEA researchers, helped sway public opinion—and, ultimately, the Conroe school board.

Also influencing the board was a labor-management cost-cutting committee's recommendation against privatization. The panel found that Conroe's new food service manager had actually put operations in the black—largely through better billing practices and quality control.

Barely a month after the town hall meeting, the school board voted against privatizing food services. Keys to CEA's success:

■ **Involving support staff.** For six Saturdays in a row, an ESP Task Force gathered research on the track record of privatizers across the country and cranked out flyers, letters, and position papers. Bus drivers delivered these materials to parents and urged them to write letters to newspaper editors.

"Our biggest concern," says driver Lottie Thacker, "was that if they privatized food service, there would be a domino affect on services like transportation. We rallied behind food service workers and encouraged them to get involved."

■ **Making the right arguments.** When support employees—many of whom are parents or grandparents of kids in Conroe schools—articulated concerns about wage cuts or child safety, taxpayers *listened.*

"Most parents," Thacker explains, "prefer to have friends and neighbors working with their kids rather than transient workers whose bosses are some distant corporation."

■ **Staying on top of the school board.** CEA members, even food service workers in their aprons, appeared *en masse* at school board meetings. At each meeting, a different Association leader shared CEA's latest research and voiced the local's opposition to privatization.

■ **Building teacher-ESP unity.** Teacher Dennis Blake, an Association rep at Oakridge High School, played a leading role in organizing a second CEA task force to educate certified staff on the privatization issue and gain their support for the campaign.

■ **Using Association reps to get the word out.** School-site Association reps also "alerted people of the dangers privatization poses to jobs and quality," reports UniServ Director Pam Fowler.

"They handed out materials directed at teachers and spread the word to professional staff. They asked, 'If we don't prevent privatization of auxiliary services, what will keep the district from privatizing instruction down the road?' That got folks interested."

■ **Staying vigilant.** Because CEA leaders monitor school board meetings, they learned about privatization plans right away—and acted quickly.

"You've got to stay informed about what your administration is doing," Thacker stresses, "and know what's happening in other districts, because the same thing could happen in yours."

For More Information

Fax UniServ Director Pam Fowler at 281/496-6650.

The Bottom Line

School safety: Nearly 3,000 children die from gunfire *off* school grounds each year, reports the Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice. Last year, schools reported 40 shooting deaths, making the risk of getting shot in school nearly one in a million.

Computers: Only 10 percent of U.S. schools, say researchers from Market Data Retrieval, can boast a school-wide computer network, ready Internet and CD-ROM access, and a student-per-computer ratio close to or less than five-to-one.

Working women: In 71 percent of America's married-couple families with children, both husband and wife now work outside the home. Twenty years ago, reports the AFL-CIO, both parents in just 54 percent of families with kids worked outside the home.

Slow start: White and Black three-year-olds are twice as likely as Hispanic three-year-olds to study in pre-primary programs. Only 21 percent of Hispanic youngsters are in pre-schools, perhaps one reason why 30 percent of Hispanic students later drop out.

In Private Hands

Show Private Schools the Money?

Instead of fixing its own roofs, a Pennsylvania school board leaks money to private schools.

As a parent activist at her son's Pennsylvania elementary school, Cynthia Frey spent a lot of time last year raising money for playground equipment and worrying about inoperable drinking fountains and a shortage of science books.

So when the Southeast Delco school board voted 7-0 in March to tap the district's $2.8 million budget surplus for private and religious school tuition vouchers—$250 for kindergarten, $500 for grades 1-8, and $1,000 for high school—Frey says she went "ballistic."

"I was so darn angry," she recalls. "I thought, how *dare* they send money elsewhere when so much has to be fixed at Delcroft Elementary!"

That anger prompted this mother of two to become one of eight co-plaintiffs in a parent/taxpayer suit against the voucher scheme—a suit supported by a coalition of 40 parent, civil rights, and education groups, including NEA's Pennsylvania affiliate.

In brief, the plaintiffs are asking the courts to rule that use of public funds for private school vouchers violates the state school code and constitution.

There's a lot at stake.

If Southeast Delco board members—only one of whom has a child in public school—prevail, warns Pennsylvania State Education Association staffer John Clark, "the door will open for any Pennsylvania district to create a flow-through vehicle to get public money to private or religious schools."

The Southeast Delco board seems to have its tactics down: Plan in secret, pit public and religious school parents against one another, and package the effort as an "enrollment stabilization plan" to save money on teacher salaries and facilities.

"The board is really telling kids,'If you go someplace else, we will give your mother and father a reward,'" fumes parent activist Cynthia Frey.

"We need to tell children we believe in them and are willing to invest in them."

Gene Walsh

Second grade teacher Gail McCune, a lifelong resident of Southeast Delaware County, Pennsylvania, is a plaintiff in a lawsuit against her district's school voucher plan. "I felt I owed it to my parents and my community," she says. "And my family wouldn't talk to me otherwise."

The 4,100 Southeast Delco students aren't seeing much investment from the current school board.

Gail McCune, president of the 240-member Southeast Delco Education Association, stresses that the schools need money for building maintenance, class size reduction, technology, and restoration of programs cut in the past—from art to business classes.

"Why is money being given away?" asks McCune, who's not only a teacher, but a district resident, parent, and plaintiff in the voucher suit.

"My school, Harris Elementary, has a leaking roof," she says, "but we haven't complained because we've assumed there wasn't any money."

To fight the plan, members of a new Community Action Committee are educating residents about the downside of vouchers, laying the groundwork for the election of a new school board in 1999, and encouraging taxpayers to make some noise.

"Most parents think they can't do anything about public education—and some don't even know they have a vote," says committee member Frey. "But we're teaching people how to vote wisely and reminding them they can write letters and address board members at meetings."

Along with what's wrong with vouchers, board members can expect to hear more about what's *right* with local public schools, from parents like Frey and McCune.

Frey likes Delcroft Elementary's "dynamic" principal, its balance of work and play, its buddy system linking kindergartners to fifth graders, and its open door to parents.

Not to mention the teachers.

"The teachers are very involved and respectful of the children," Frey says. "They know about everything—they're smart and articulate," she adds. "You just have to be there to see that this school works!"

For More Information

Call John Clark, Pennsylvania State Education Association, 800/255-7732.

Bad Choice in Milwaukee

Where there's voucher action, lawyers from the pro-voucher Institute for Justice are behind the scenes.

The Southeast Delco school board in Pennsylvania gets aid from the IFJ, and so do pro-voucher forces in Wisconsin, where the state Supreme Court recently ruled that expansion of Milwaukee's voucher program to religious schools does not violate the Constitution.

The court ruled that "not one cent" of Milwaukee voucher money "flows from the state to a sectarian private school . . . except as a result of the necessary and intervening choices of individual parents." NEA will petition the U.S. Supreme Court to review the decision.

Voice Against Vouchers

The bad news: A decent piece of Louisiana legislation—funding preschool programs for at-risk kids—was hijacked last spring by public school opponents, who won $10 million in funding for vouchers.

The good news: That bill died in the state Senate, thanks to lobbying by the Louisiana Association of Educators and state associations of superintendents and school boards.

Also speaking against the bill was one of its biggest initial supporters, state Superintendent Cecil Picard, who explains his turnaround below:

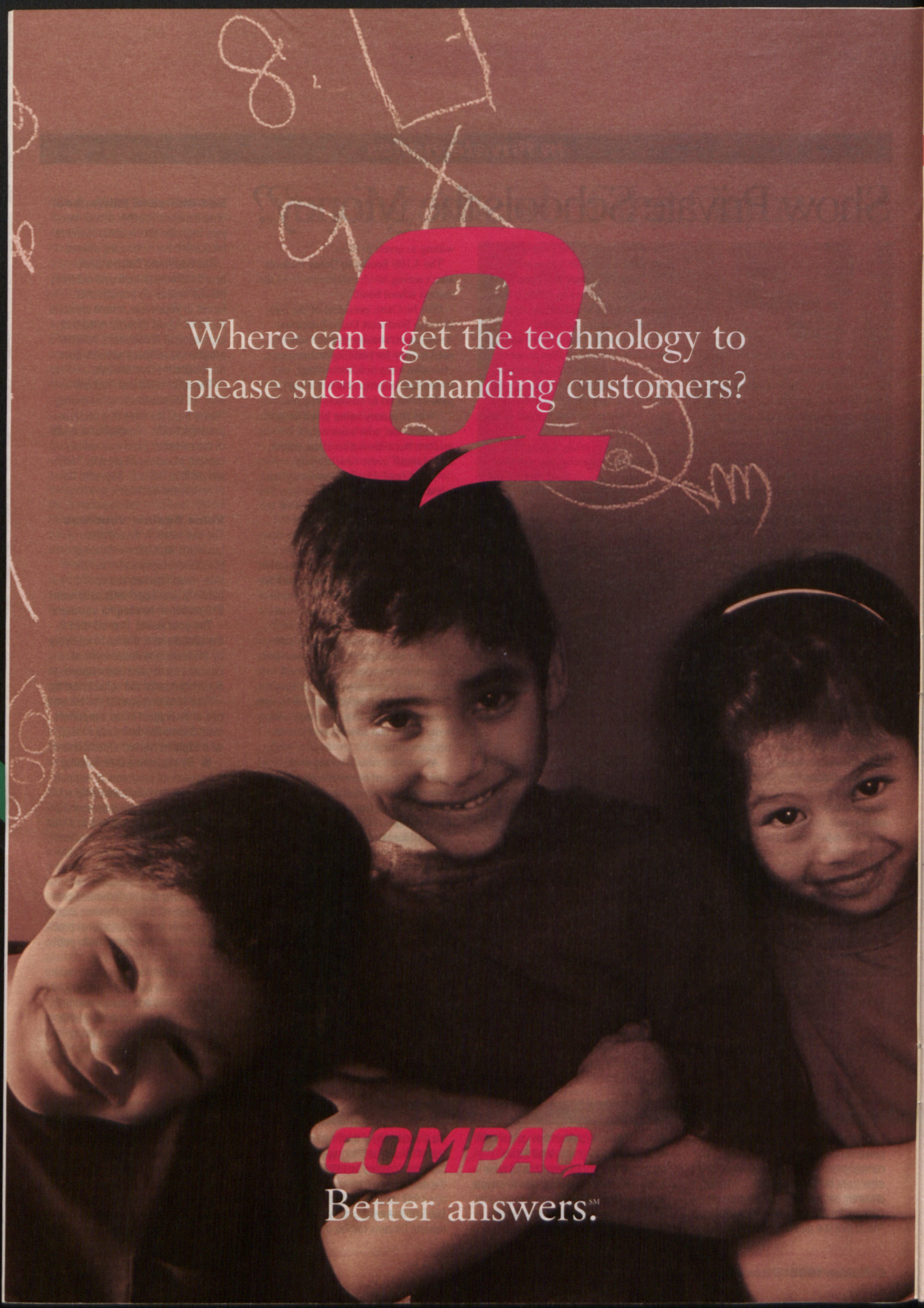
- "By expanding state funding for preschool programs to nonpublic schools and day care centers," Picard said, "we would be opening the doors of public funding to a vast system of government contractors and service providers over which the state has no control."
- "Louisiana historically has undervalued and underfunded public education. I do not believe that the answer to our educational problems is diverting money from public schools."
- "Day care centers and private and parochial schools hand pick their students and charge tuition," Picard added. "In contrast, public schools accept and serve every child who walks through their doors."

Exodus: A group representing religious conservatives has launched a campaign to "rescue" 20 million children from public education. Christian children, says Rev. Bob Simonds of Citizens for Excellence in Education, "must exit the public schools."

Vouchers: Wal-Mart heir John Walton is working with Wall Street financier Theodore Forstmann to raise $200 million to send poor kids to private schools. Public schools are a monopoly, says Forstmann, and "monopolies produce bad products at high prices."

Tax cut: More than two-thirds of the "relief" from the "Taxpayer Relief Act" Congress passed in 1997 is going to the nation's wealthiest 1 percent. Average 1997 income for this elite group: $666,000. Average tax saving: $7,135, reports Citizens for Tax Justice.

Kids in poverty: Nearly one of every three American children—32.4 percent—was poor for at least two months in 1994, the last year with full statistics, reports the U.S. Census Bureau. The Census study was one of the first to tally "episodic" poverty.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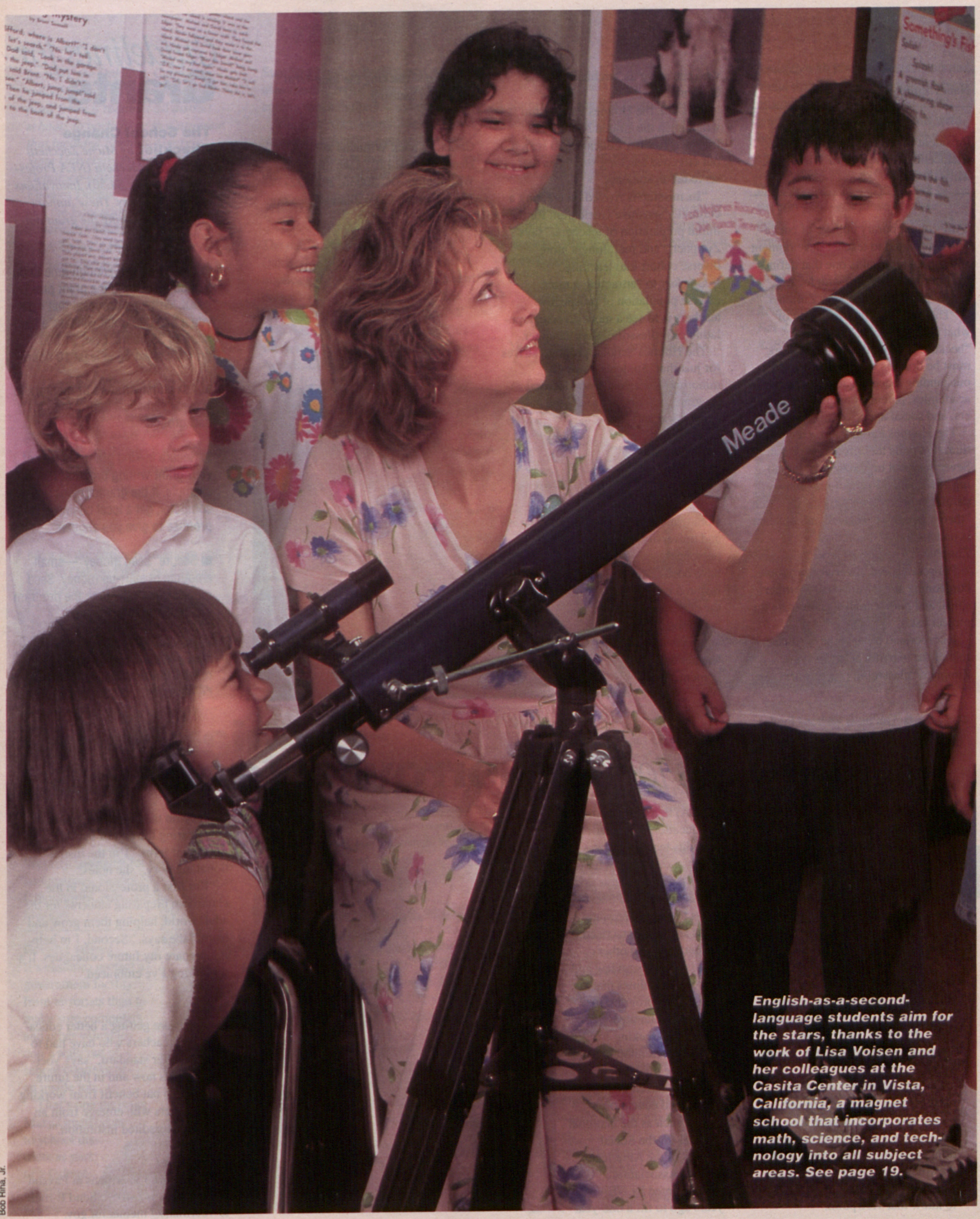

Bob Riha, Jr.

English-as-a-second-language students aim for the stars, thanks to the work of Lisa Voisen and her colleagues at the Casita Center in Vista, California, a magnet school that incorporates math, science, and technology into all subject areas. See page 19.

Innovators

Down-Home Partnership

Innovator:
Nancy Zimpher

Job:
President of the Holmes Partnership. Chancellor, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee.

Bright Idea:
"Any contemporary college of education committed to teacher development and school renewal is one that defines itself as in partnership with local school professionals," says Zimpher.

"That's a novel interpretation of what an ed school is," she notes, "because it says this important work must be done as a partnership"—of outstanding teachers, administrators, academics, parents, community leaders, and social agencies.

The Holmes Partnership is a consortium that pulls these forces together. Seven national organizations, including NEA, and 75 school-university partnerships work on projects in which "theory becomes practical and practice is understood as theoretical," says Zimpher.

Pre-service and in-service programs, burgeoning school-university partnerships, and policy analysis dominate the project list.

Incorporated in all is the "critical role of the expert teacher," says Zimpher, "classroom practitioners who can serve as "architects of the curriculum."

This fall, the Holmes Partnership will launch the United Network to Improve Teacher Education to search out effective teaching strategies that serve urban students.

"Its mission is riveted on creating a culturally sensitive curriculum for the initial preparation of teachers," says Zimpher, "and recruiting a more diverse cohort into teaching."

One key to "attracting a more diverse population of prospective teachers is to see a more diverse population of professors," says Zimpher.

The Holmes Scholar program strives for just that. Students—usually minorities—recruited to a doctoral program are nurtured to degree completion and encouraged to become professors.

Impact:
Both teachers and university personnel have been inspired by the new collaborative approach to teacher development. A database is tracking the long-term effects on learning.

For More:
Contact Chuck Williams at NEA Headquarters, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036, 202/822-7703. E-mail: CHWilliams@nea.org.

Mike Munden

Guidelines for Grants

The School Change Checklist *by Miche Zocchetti and Nicole Zocchetti (NEA Professional Library, $4.50). Innovations often take money. These authors offer tips on getting the grant dollars you need.*

- Leave yourself enough time to do a good job writing the grant proposal. Writing a proposal that'll get you a $20,000 grant will take a minimum of 35 hours. Even $1,000 grants will eat up at least 10 hours.
- Ask administrators or mentors to provide statistical information for background.
- Secure in-kind grants as part of your grant-writing process. For example, if the grantor gives you a computer, get a local business to promise to give you another.
- Secure "seed money"—small amounts of start-up money. Seed money gives validity to the program you're trying to get going.

The School Change Checklist *offers more ideas on creating and funding school change. To order, call 800/ 229-4200, stock #2155-X-00-F.*

Setting Standards for Tomorrow's Teachers

Innovator:
Margo Voermans

Job:
Third grade teacher, Paxson School, Missoula, Montana. Member of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) Specialty Areas Studies Board.

Bright Idea:
As the only practicing classroom teacher on NCATE's nine-member Specialty Areas Study Board, Voermans often serves as a "reality check."

College professors and policymakers make up the rest of the board, and "some of them lose track because their focus is on preparation," says Voermans. "But I look at the young faces every day and get another viewpoint—and they want to know that viewpoint."

NCATE, a coalition of 30 education organizations, accredits teacher preparation institutions by setting professional standards and conducting on-site interviews to ensure the standards are being practiced.

Voermans and other board members review and approve guidelines that lay out an ideal program for each curricular area. Institutions seeking NCATE accreditation must meet these guidelines, which are developed by specialized education groups such as the National Council for the Social Studies or the American Library Association.

Appointed by NEA 10 years ago to fill a one-year vacancy on the board, Voermans is now nearing the end of her third three-year term. "I'm the institutional memory," she notes.

"I'm first a professional in the classroom preparing students for the adult world, helping them grow and learn," she says. "Second, I'm helping prepare my future colleagues. It's something I've embraced."

Tom Bauer

Impact:
"Students are getting a better education from teachers who have had to meet a higher standard," says Voermans. "Kids now and in the future cannot help but benefit from working with teachers who emerge from an NCATE-accredited institution."

For More:
Contact Margo Voermans at Paxson School, 406/542-4055. Send E-mail to voermans@metnet.mt.gov.

A New Take on Ebonics and Teaching

In 1996, the Oakland, California school board created a national furor when it required all district schools to participate in a program that included Ebonics. Georgia State University professor Lisa Delpit, co-editor of The Real Ebonics Debate: Power, Language and the Education of African-American Children, *spoke with* NEA Today*'s Michelle Tucker about the story behind the Ebonics furor.*

What is Ebonics?

Ebonics has been defined as a combination of the words "ebony" and "phonics"—in other words, "black sounds."

There are different contextual forms of Black language—formal and informal varieties. But in general, Ebonics is the language many African Americans speak, which some linguists link to the language spoken in West Africa.

What attracted the Oakland board to Ebonics?

Most of the African-American children in Oakland were performing miserably. But one school, the Prescott School, consistently performed near the top of the district.

Its students were all low-income African-American children. And it adopted a program called the Standard English Proficiency, which uses the children's home language and culture to teach them standard English.

The task force examining the performance of African-American children decided to ensure that the program was placed in all the schools.

Why did the Ebonics issue explode in Oakland?

The media presented it as though Oakland was teaching Ebonics. The implication was that the Oakland board only wanted children to acquire their home language, only wanted to work with them in their own language. This was a total misjudgment of how African Americans typically see schools.

In African-American communities, the school has been a place where children form a bridge between African-American English or language and "standard" or "edited" English.

Also, there were folk who implied that the Oakland educators were trying to separate children from the mainstream. And there were those saying, "Oakland is trying to get more money"—as if some additional funding were not a legitimate goal for solving a problem.

Nowhere did I hear a discussion that focused on what is good for the children. The kids in Oakland never got the benefit of understanding what was successful instructionally at Prescott.

What are the lessons from the Ebonics debate?

Rather than see this language as just something to be fixed, we as a larger society have to understand its beauty. Then we can then acknowledge it as a wonderful language form, while we also teach "edited" English.

If kids want to fit in, if they want to be part of the group, they'll learn the language. But if they feel rejected by it, they'll resist it.

Is that why you support curriculums bridging home language and standard English?

Yes. Sharon Nelson-Barber has done research with Pima Indian students and found that their language more approximated standard English until fourth grade. At that point, the students were beginning to understand the negative view that the school held about them.

You make your allegiances with those people you feel are going to support you—not those who are going to be antagonistic to you and your community.

To order The Real Ebonics Debate *($12 plus $3.50 s&h), contact Rethinking Schools at 800/669-4192, Fax 414/964-7220. Send E-mail to RSBusiness@aol.com.*

Johnny Crawford

Risky Business

Innovator:
Mary W. Green

Job:
Security specialist for high-risk applications, Sandia National Laboratories, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Bright Idea:
It's easier to protect a government facility from terrorists than to make sure computers and other valuables don't walk out of a school courtesy of an inside job.

That's one message Mary Green takes to school districts as part of a federal program to help schools assess security needs.

Jim Thompson

One of the main threats to a school's security: contracting out custodial services. "Folks you've never laid eyes on have free run of your building at night," says Green. "It is a high-risk situation."

Even with high-tech security, Green says old-fashioned cleanliness is still critical to school safety. "Poorly maintained buildings become security risks," says Green. "It looks as though no one's in charge."

And staff janitors tend to do a better job, Green notes, since "there's a pride of ownership."

Impact:
No final data link contract services to crime. Schools are lax at reporting statistics that cast a negative light, says Green, making it difficult to address security issues. But she's working to change that. "Right now, school security is an art," she says. "I hope to make it a science someday."

For More:
Contact Green Sandia Labs, 505/844-7746. Send E-mail to mgreen@sandia.gov.

Action Plan for Reading

The Learning First Alliance, a coalition of NEA and 11 other education organizations, has released Every Child Reading: An Action Plan. *The 30-page paper notes that to ensure virtually all children learn to read well, the following steps must be taken:*

- Base educational decisions on evidence, not ideology. Call off the "reading wars."
- Promote adoption of texts based on the evidence of what works.
- Provide adequate professional development for teachers and paraprofessionals on instructional strategies.
- Promote whole-school adoption of effective methods.
- Involve parents in support of their children's reading.
- Improve pre-service education and instruction.
- Provide additional staff for tutoring and class size reduction.
- Improve early identification and intervention for children at risk of early reading failure.
- Intensify reading research to virtually eliminate early reading failure.

For a copy of *Every Child Reading*, visit the Web at www.learningfirst.org.

Students &

Good Stuff

Problem-Based Learning
In *Problems as Possibilities: Problem-Based Learning for K-12 Education*, Linda Torp and Sara Sage discuss the advantages of problem-based learning, what it looks like in an elementary, middle, and high school classroom, and how to develop a curriculum around this model. 101 pp., $15.95 from the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1250 N. Pitt St., Alexandria, VA 22314-1453, 800/933-2723. Visit the Web at www.ascd.org.

A Better Mouse Trap
Discover the problem-solving model that led Ohio students to design a better packaging geometry for a national cookie in *Engineering Problem Solving for Mathematics, Science, and Technology Education.* Developed in conjunction with high school teachers trained in engineering concepts, this 135-page book is $15 from the Dartmouth Project for Teaching Engineering Problem Solving, Thayer School of Engineering, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH 03755-8000, 650/843-11352. Visit the Web at http://engineering.dartmouth.edu/teps.

School Safety Program
Crime in the Schools: Reducing Fear and Disorder with Student Problem Solving examines the School Safety Program adopted by a Charlotte, North Carolina high school. Systematic community policing and student participation in the problem solving contributed to cutting the number of student suspensions due to disruptive behavior by 59 percent. 235 pp., $23.95 from the Police Execu-tive Research Forum, 1120 Connec-ticut Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20036, 888/202-4563.

The Global Sweatshop
The Global Sweatshop Curriculum Packet, designed for students in grades 4-12, provides a report on teaching about sweatshop issues and offers practical suggestions for student action. Issues are framed around two specific child labor campaigns (FoulBall and Rugmark) and three campaigns dealing with sweatshop practices (Nike, Disney, and Guess?). $12.50 plus $2.50 s&h (per total order) from the Labor/Community Alliance, P.O. Box 5077, Fresno, CA 93755, 209/226-0477. E-mail: clr2@igc.apc.org.

You know you have a problem when . . .

"You have so many students that your 40 chairs are filled—and students are sitting at your desk and on the floor."

Elizabeth Ahlgren, high school math teacher, San Diego, California

Dilemma

Crunch at the Keyboard

How do you give all students enough computer time?

Tedd Pitts

At my school, we have a well-equipped computer lab that we go to about three times a week. But in each individual classroom, we have only one computer.

At the beginning of the year, I give my students a number according to their alphabetical order. I achieve equal time by putting chips with students' numbers on them into a container. When I select a number, that student has computer time that day while everyone else does sustained silent reading.

This works well for activities like oral reading as well.

Christine Spigarelli
Fifth grade teacher
Crystal Falls, Michigan

In my class for pre-K handicapped students, we use the Ellison cutouts to label things like children's chairs, cubbies, and jobs. I make an extra set for each child's turn at the computer and put velcro on the back of each cutout. Then I put velcro on a laminated file folder and post that next to computer.

The students take their symbol and put it in line on the file folder for a turn at the computer.

When a turn begins, I set my little Barney kitchen timer for five minutes. When Barney sings, it's the next student's turn. It works well to help them transition, teaches them to keep track of their own turns, and saves me many fights.

Wendy Paser
Pre-K teacher
Clearwater, Florida

In our middle school of 450 students, each classroom has three computers. With classes ranging from 20 to 28 students, computer time is limited. To make sure that it's fairly allocated, I use a chart designating specific times each student is allowed on a computer.

Use of the computers at undesignated times is dependent on demand and reason for use. Though students can learn while "playing" on the computer, students wishing to complete a school assignment are given preference.

Our school also has two labs that can be used by entire classes. Sixth grade students have a volunteer teacher teaching keyboarding skills one class period a day.

With improved computer skills, students can complete class work more efficiently, and more of them will be able to use the computers.

Brian McGuire
Sixth grade teacher
Mauston, Wisconsin

Our school was given a teaching method through an IBM grant called Teaching and Learning with Computers.

Each classroom has six to 12 computers connected to two separate base networks. Each class may choose which server it connects to according to what software is needed for the unit skill.

My subject is writing and language mechanics. I have nine networked computers and two free-standing multimedia computers.

I divide each of my classes into three teams of nine to 10 students each. One team is at the computer station while the rest of the students are writing project material, games, journals, and assignments.

This gives each student 45-50 minutes of computer study in language skills every three days. Students also gain confidence to learn on their own, with small group help or individual attention when needed.

Jeanne Barber-Morris
Elementary teacher
Milton, Florida

Got an Answer?

What do you do when a student repeatedly asks to make up work?
Send your answer to *NEA Today* through regular mail, Fax 202/822-7206, or E-mail at **dilemma2@neatoday.nea.org**. Please include your job title and grade level.

Respondents published here will receive a bright *NEA Today* mug!

Strategies

You know you've been successful when . . .

"Students *and* teachers are using library computers without help."

Marjorie Clark, high school librarian, Chester, Virginia

Delight

Adding Up in Any Language

A math and science magnet school helps English-as-a-second-language students strut their stuff.

Second grade teacher Lisa Voisen points to a bright spot in her classroom, an English-as-a-second-language student who had always been pegged as a slow learner and a poor reader.

"She really gets science," says Voisen, who teaches at the Casita Center, a K-5 math, science, and technology magnet school in Vista, California. "She did poorly on her standardized tests—which were in English—but if you could see what she produces, you'd see that she's really smart."

This child and many other ESL students throughout the school now "produce" with a curriculum developed by the staff and the community that incorporates math, science, and technology in the teaching of all subject areas.

In the xeriscape (drought-resistant) demonstration garden, for example, staff teach a water conservation curriculum that encompasses many subjects.

The school, which serves many low-income families, boasts a 10,000-square-foot botanical garden, a technology center, a video studio, a hands-on science lab, and a Starlab for studying the skies.

Though the Casita curriculum centers around math and science, it reaches more students than ever by targeting a wider spectrum of intelligences and abilities.

"Students are taught visually, audially, and kinesthetically, through Howard Gardner's seven intelligences, to achieve the same goals as other kids who've had more advantages at home," says Voisen.

The Casita approach has overcome gender as well as income divides.

Voisen notes that girls, who are more typically math-phobic, have become comfortable with math when they use it more regularly, across all subject areas.

Likewise, boys have developed stronger language skills when non-fiction science books are used to teach reading.

To document student achievement that may not be reflected in grades and test scores, educators at the Casita Center use portfolios to supplement report cards.

But even by traditional measures, Casita students are making strides. Ten years ago, students were functioning one or two years below grade level. Now, test scores are up. The school has a waiting list.

And on the first day of enrollment last year, notes Voisen, "People were lined up all the way outside."

—Amanda Karsten

For More Information

Visit the Casita Center's Web site at http://viper.vusd.k12.ca.us/cas/ or contact Lisa Voisen at 760/724-8442.

Bob Rina, Jr.

California teacher Lisa Voisen knows a white snake can make a lesson come alive. English-as-a-second-language students are flourishing with a curriculum that incorporates science, math, and technology in all subject areas.

Idea Exchange

Arts and Science United

Since many schools separate the arts and sciences, it's up to individual teachers to reunite them. Taking our cues from scientists like Einstein and Galileo, who studied music as well, we have our orchestra, technology, and earth science/astronomy classes work in tandem.

Paul's science labs use music to help students imagine what it's like to be in outer space. Bob's orchestra students compose music—using computer technology—inspired by digital photographs of heavenly bodies.

Students who participate in both orchestra and in the technology or earth science classes perform better academically. Perhaps this is due to a left-brain, right-brain connection, or an increased appreciation for self-discipline. Or perhaps students are motivated by the way the discovery process encourages creativity.

To bring this link between science and the arts to your school, create plays or presentations to promote the love of science through the arts.

And apply for grants that create opportunities to unite the disciplines—our US West-sponsored Web site features images of space and accompanying electronic music.

Paul Crips and Robert Mathews
Cheyenne, Wyoming

Works4Me
nea's e-mail classroom tip of the week!

Have a great idea? Pass along your tips to *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036, Fax 202/822-7206, or E-mail: ideas@neatoday.nea.org.

For more tips, check out NEA's weekly E-mail service, Works4Me. To sign up, send an E-mail to lyris@list.nea.org.

- In the "subject" line, type: sign me up, NEA!
- In the message block, type: subscribe Works4Me
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To submit your own tip, E-mail it to: owner-Works4Me @list.nea.org.

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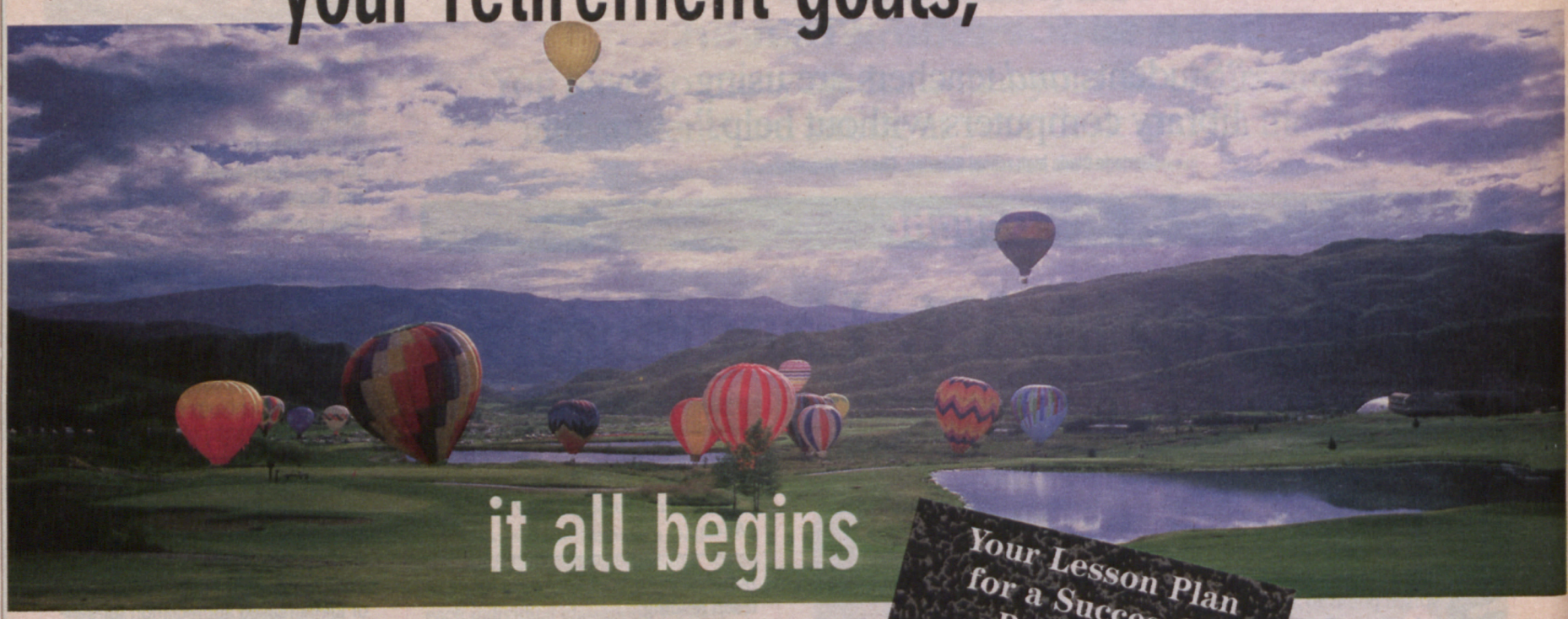

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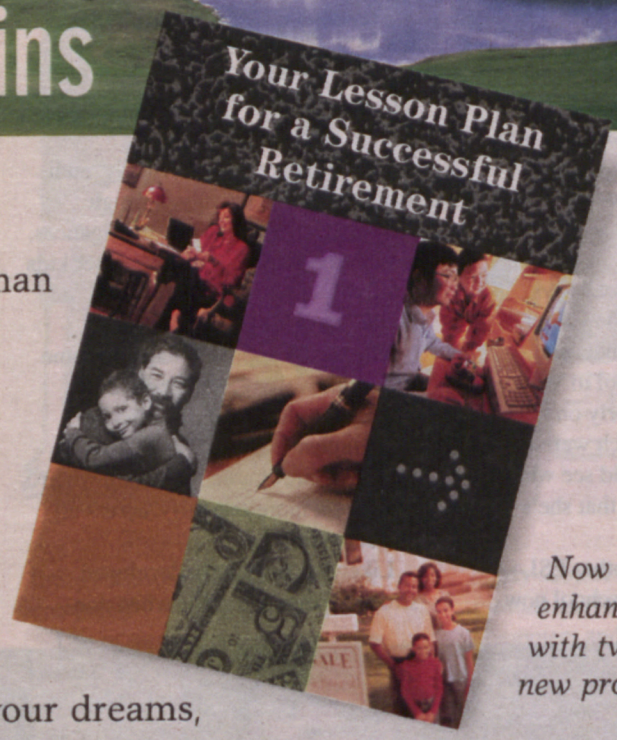

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Inside Scoop

Looping: Two Years with the Same Class

The term "looping" may be a fairly recent addition to the education lexicon, but the concept of looping harks back to the days of the little red schoolhouse. Common in European and Japanese schools, looping allows a teacher to remain with the same, single-grade class for two or more years. Experts estimate thousands of U.S. educators are currently "in the loop."

At its best, looping . . .

- Involves educators and parents enthusiastic about its potential for sparking student success.
- Is flexible, allowing teachers and parents to make changes at the end of the first year.
- Accommodates students with a wide range of abilities in the classroom.

How does looping work?

At its most basic, two teachers or teams of teachers in contiguous grades create a partnership. This pairing permits, for example, a first grade teacher—or a seventh grade team—to progress with students to the next grade. Meanwhile, the partner moves back down a grade to begin a new cycle.

The process is different—and some say easier—than multi-age grouping because the entire class stays together for two years, giving the teacher responsibility for the content of one grade-level curriculum at a time.

Why is looping gaining in popularity?

"For years parents have said to teachers: 'I wish you were getting my child next year,'" says Jim Grant, founder of the Society for Developmental Education and a long-time teacher in looped and multi-age classrooms.

Looping, he says, is a low-cost, easily implemented way to make that wish come true. Two willing teachers and an understanding principal are all that's needed to start.

Grant, who conducts looping workshops nationwide, cites support from parents and educators who recognize that it's unnatural to sever relationships between teachers and students every 36 weeks.

"As adults we value long-term relationships built on trust," says Grant. "We should allow our kids to do the same."

Is looping good for teachers?

"I just sit here and smile when I think about it," says Kathy Gebauer, who's moved to second grade with her students at Ben Franklin Elementary School in Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin this year.

A veteran first grade teacher, Gebauer got her principal's approval to try looping as a way to counter a perennial professional frustration—too little time in the school year to get some of her students where she thought they could be. And there was some natural curiosity, especially when it came to her budding writers: "I always wanted to see how much further I could take them."

Gebauer's experience bears out the claim that looping can increase instructional time without lengthening the school day or year.

When her first looping class began second grade two years ago, she had planned an easy first day. But her students clamored to start their writing. "I scrapped all my plans for a light week and got right to work," says Gebauer. "It was as if summer vacation was just a long weekend."

The same held true for math. "I bypassed a lot of review," Gebauer notes. "I knew what had been covered and where we'd left off."

It was also smooth sailing in the non-academic areas. "I saved so much time. I didn't have the problem of building trust, and the children weren't anxious," says Gebauer.

What are the benefits for students?

"I felt the strong kids went further, pushing and pulling each other," says Gebauer. "I let them work on projects I might not have if I hadn't had such a good handle on their capabilities."

"Kids love the adult connection," says Patricia Crosby, a communications/social studies teacher on a two-person team that loops with 50 students from seventh to eighth grade at Coelho Middle School in Attleboro, Massachusetts.

For children from unstable families, looping—mandated for grades 1-8 throughout the district—has special meaning.

"Kids trust teachers a lot more," says Crosby. "They'll say things to you they wouldn't say to anyone else.

"Attendance is much better," Crosby adds. "Since I only have 50 students—not 150—I'll call to follow up if someone's not in school. Teachers can more easily catch a drug or alcohol problem. We know our students' behavior better and can spot tell-tale changes."

Except for math, where some children may leave the team depending on their level, classes are heterogeneous and inclusive. "Because they're together for two years, I think my students become more tolerant of differences in abilities and personalities," says Crosby.

Can looping crack tough education problems?

Gebauer can vouch for experts who credit looping with a decline in retention rates, special education referrals, and discipline problems.

"I had questions about some students, but by the end of the second year they were all where they should have been," says Gebauer. "I think it's that extra time—really knowing their strengths and weaknesses. I didn't have to guess."

Looping can offer needed stability for those students with behavior problems. It takes patience to deal with the same challenging kids for two years, but Crosby calls the consistency good for students. "They know I mean what I say."

Any downside?

"If you have a kid with a behavior problem, sometimes by the second year you've gone through all your tricks," says Crosby. Her school has a support team and peer mediators to help. In most looping classrooms, teachers and parents have the option of transferring a student out—especially when there are discipline problems or personality clashes.

For teachers, looping may require in-service or other training to prepare for a new phase of child development. Changing assignments could involve waivers or dual certifications. Moving up could mean a bigger class or losing a teaching assistant.

And there may be other details to deal with. Some union locals, for example, require the posting of a new job opening before a looping teacher can move up or down.

Is looping for everyone?

Experts recommend teachers be presented with looping as an option, not a requirement. When Attleboro, Massachusetts became an all-looping district, a few teachers left or retired. But those who stayed must have liked their new looping arrangement—faculty absences dropped from an average of seven days per year to fewer than three.

Some teachers and parents worry the bond created by looping will be too difficult to break. It was hard, Gebauer acknowledges.

"I worried about them going to third grade," she says, "but they all did fine, even though they were broken up among five classes."

For More Information

- For information on workshops and an annual summer conference on looping, contact the Society for Developmental Education, 10 Sharon Rd., Peterborough, NH, 03458, 800/924-9621 or visit the Web at www.socdeved.com. To order *The Looping Handbook* ($24.95) or *Looping Q&A* ($12.95), call 800/321-0401.
- *Multiyear Assignment of Teachers to Students* provides a compilation of articles, studies, and book excerpts on looping. $72 from the Educational Research Service, 2000 Clarendon Blvd., Arlington, VA 22201, 800/791-9308. E-mail: ers@ers.org.

Professional

Good Stuff

Best Practices
The Teaching and Learning Institute, sponsored by NEA and the Stetson University Center, is offering three-day programs for educators who want to learn more about the nationally recognized Best Practices. Upcoming sessions include "Facultyness: Strong Staff, Strong School" (November 19-22), "National Standards, Local Classrooms" (February 4-7, 1999), and "Teacher Rejuvenation" (March 25-28, 1999). Tuition is $475. Upon successful completion of each session, a participant will receive a certificate worth 45 in-service hours. For more information, contact Melissa Scholes, Stetson University Center, 510 Campus Street, Celebration, FL 34747, 407/566-1620. E-mail: center@stetson.edu or visit the Web at www.stetson.edu/academy.

Looking to the Future
Why enter the teaching field? How do you land your first job? How do you succeed once you've landed that job? These questions and more are addressed in the *Teacher Career Starter*, a resource book that guides college students and teachers new to the profession through the early stages of a career in education. $14.95 from LearningExpress, 20 Academy St., P.O. Box 7100, Norwalk, CT 06852, 800/733-3000. ISBN# 1-57685-138-9.

NEA Tips on the Web
Learn how Rhode Island teacher Mary Lee Drouin uses her performance abilities to teach English literature to her high school students. Listen to author/activist Alfie Kohn discuss the pros and cons of applying quality management theory to the classroom. And click to find an archive of short, practical classroom tips from NEA's Works4Me project. It's all on the Web at www.nea.org/teaching.

Making the Link
In *Making the Link: Teacher Professional Development on the Internet*, Ron Owston covers the basics of what makes the Internet a powerful professional development tool and discusses how to customize a plan of action, working with virtual professional communities and conducting Internet-based research. 174 pp., $24 from Heinemann, 361 Hanover St., Portsmouth, NH 03801-3912, 603/431-7894.

You know you have a problem when . . .

"You are no longer enthusiastic about going to work."

Kay Saxton, high school business/English teacher, Evanston, Wyoming

Dilemma

Upon Reflection . . .

How do you get quality feedback when the principal doesn't provide it?

First, I seek feedback from my students. I sometimes conduct surveys, either in writing or orally, to determine their interests as well as their likes and dislikes.

Second, I seek feedback from the parents. I send home newsletters about class activities and events and always invite parents to respond with questions, concerns, and comments. Parents take advantage of this opportunity, and their feedback is always taken into consideration.

Third, I seek feedback from other educators. Ask another teacher to observe a lesson you've prepared during one of their prep periods. Reflect on what information you're seeking from the observer, and ask clear and concise questions afterward.

Jennifer Knowles
Instructional assistant/
substitute teacher
Pine Hill, New Jersey

When I was a second-year teacher of first graders (almost 40 years ago), I had a principal whose "quality feedback" consisted of telling me I was not spending enough time teaching my 45 students how to color within the lines.

So I devised a Teacher's Report Card for my students. First, I asked them what they thought made a good teacher. Some of their answers: "Cares about learning," "Tries to make sure I understand," "Likes me," "Is teaching me how to read," "Doesn't lie, cheat, or steal." I wrote them down and gave each student a copy. Children marked their grade next to each item.

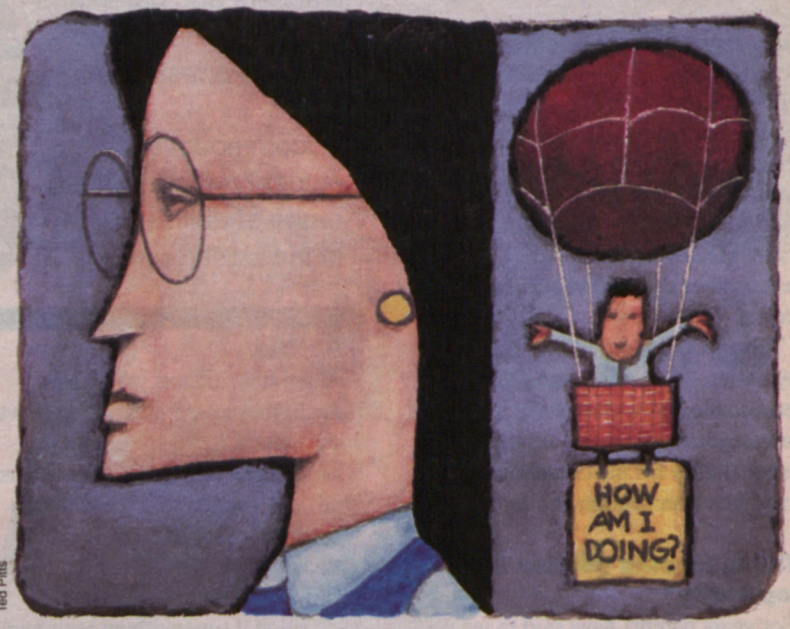
No, I didn't get straight *A*s, and some comments stung. But I learned more from those evaluations than I had from some college courses, and certainly more than from my principal.

As I progressed through the grades, I gave older students evaluation forms that dealt more with content and teaching methods, such as "Which of the novels read this semester would you recommend for next year?" and "Do you prefer lectures, working in a group, or individual projects?"

When I was an adjunct instructor at the college level, students filled out evaluation forms provided by the college. Those were probably the least effective of all, since the students had no input in developing the questionnaires and the questions were not specific to the course content or level.

So create your own report card. You may hear some things you don't like, but you'll also find out what you're doing right.

Jo Walters
Retired teacher
Chattanooga, Tennessee



Quality feedback should come from experts in the field. Try your peers.

At one school where I worked, there was a peer mentoring program—teachers voluntarily observing other teachers. Teachers were more comfortable being observed because it wasn't by an administrator.

All it takes to start are two teachers looking for feedback, some predetermined criteria, and trust between the teacher and the "observer" that this is a learning experience for both.

Darrell Sandrue
English teacher, grades 5-8
Stanhope, New Jersey

Avoid the faculty room gripe sessions at lunch that often make you feel like throwing in the towel. I communicate by phone and E-mail with colleagues in other schools. Their feedback is great and immediate.

If you have a buddy in your building, spend some planning time or lunch time discussing concerns.

Denise Lilly-Rockett
Sixth grade teacher
Salt Lake City, Utah

Got an Answer?

How do you make collaboration with a student teacher a great learning experience for everyone?
Send your answer by regular mail, Fax 202/822-7206, or E-mail at dilemma2@neatoday.nea.org. Please include your job title and grade level.

Published respondents will receive a bright new *NEA Today* mug!

Growth

You know you've been successful when . . .

"You're able to impart knowledge that enables other educators to think and form conclusions."

Janie Peterson, fourth grade teacher, Crestview, Florida

Delight

Fanning First-Year Fires

Veteran educators provide year-long mentoring to guard against new-teacher burnout.

Sue Pennington has read the reports that say 20 percent of teachers leave the profession in the first three years. And the veteran educator knows that early on-the-job experiences can affect whether a teacher stays in the profession—and succeeds.

That's why Pennington, the curriculum/gifted and talented coordinator for Oklahoma's El Reno district, has worked with other veteran master teachers to develop the New Teacher Assistance Program (N-TAP).

This induction and mentoring program matches first-year teachers and those new to the district with the veterans for an entire year.

New teachers get release time to observe more experienced colleagues. Mentors also get release time to observe their mentees.

Photos by Lisa Rudy Hoke

Sue Pennington says new teachers are "full of this wonderful energy."

"It's a chance to see how things are going, to make suggestions, and to get the teacher more help if needed," says Pennington. "But it's not a formal evaluation."

When funds are available, mentors and new teachers get small stipends during the year for participating in N-TAP workshops on topics such as parent-teacher conferences and achievement testing.

New teachers laugh it up during training—and may keep smiling longer, thanks to their mentoring program.

A critical ingredient in the mentoring match-up is the proximity of the pair during the day. "There can be a lot of informal mentoring if they're in the same building" says Pennington. "They can have lunch or stop by each other's classrooms.

"We try to match content areas," she adds, "but it's more important to have effective teachers as mentors even if they're in a different area."

Sometimes new teachers get two mentors, one close by and one for content.

Oklahoma requires mentors for first-year teachers, but N-TAP exceeds the letter of the law. It includes all teachers new to El Reno, and it allows for more mentoring time—an average of two hours per week, plus workshops, summer in-service, and N-TAP social activities.

Pennington and her colleagues created the program seven years ago to supplement the summer program they'd already devised for new teachers.

That week-long program, still in place, has about 30 volunteer mentors teaching classes in cooperative learning strategies, questioning skills, and classroom management.

An administrator answers paycheck questions, school board members visit, and new teachers get to tour the town in a school bus.

Role-playing an evaluation always proves to be a highlight. A principal does the critique, a mentor acts as the teacher under review, and kids get paid a small sum to play themselves.

"This way, it's not so threatening when the real thing comes along," Pennington notes.

"We can all relate back to when we first started teaching," says Pennington. Now, working with the veterans, the new teachers in El Paso "aren't just out there on their own."

For More Information

Contact Sue Pennington, Box 580, El Reno Public Schools, El Reno, OK 73036, 405/262-0972 (phone) or 405/262-8483 (fax).

Idea Exchange

Binding Record

Here's how I curb frustration at the end of the school year when I have to record all the in-service hours I've accumulated through the year.

I take a three-ring binder at the beginning of the year and label it "Workshops for School Year 19__ - 19__." I take this binder to every workshop or training that I attend and make sure I document the title, date, presenter, location, and hours.

I keep paper in the binder for note-taking. I also take handouts from workshops, punch holes in them, and keep them in the binder.

Now, instead of frantically searching for all those certificates, I have everything I need in one notebook.

Kim Gillies
Albertville, Alabama

Just Do It

Lawyers do it. Doctors do it. Educators should do it!

No, I'm not talking about making a lot of money. I'm talking about prominently displaying educational degrees and professional certificates.

Displaying your credentials will help you appear professional and legitimate. It's very impressive, and it reinforces to the public the amount of effort it takes to become a teacher and to maintain certification.

Tom Walters
Jericho, Vermont

Works4Me
nea's e-mail classroom tip of the week!

Have a great idea? Pass along your tips to *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036, Fax 202/822-7206, or E-mail: ideas@neatoday.nea.org.

For more tips, check out NEA's weekly E-mail service, Works4Me. To sign up, send an E-mail to lyris@list.nea.org.

- In the "subject" line, type: sign me up, NEA!
- In the message block, type: subscribe Works4Me
- Send the message.

To submit your own tip, E-mail it to: owner-Works4Me @list.nea.org.

Bits & Bytes

Bytes for Beginners

Under "fair use" exceptions to the copyright law, can educators copy single-user software from their home computers to school laboratory computers?

While the current Copyright Act's set of guidelines, "Agreement on Guidelines for Classroom Copying in Not-For-Profit Educational Institutions," helps define what constitutes fair use for classroom copying of books, periodicals, and musical compositions, it does not cover the use of software.

The best strategy for staying legal when it comes to software use is to read and follow the license agreement that came with your software.

If your software license prohibits you from running multiple copies, you should contact the publisher to find out if a license is available for your specific needs.

To learn more about how fair use applies to using software in schools, check out the Software Publishers Association Web site, at www.spa.org/project/edu_copyright/cptop.htm.

My school needs access to educational technology. Where can I go to learn about federal programs that might help?

Here's a list of Web sites that'll give you a good overview of the government's role in ensuring access to technology in schools:

- U.S. Department of Education's Technology Initiatives—www.ed.gov/Technology
- National Telecommunications and Information Administration—www.ntia.doc.gov
- Benton Foundation—www.benton.org/Library/KickStart/
- E-rate Hotline—www.eratehotline.org/resources/index.html
- Education and Library Networks Coalition (EdLiNC)—www.itc.org/edlinc

Have ideas, comments, or questions about technology? You can E-mail webeditor@dear.nea.org or write to Dear Webeditor, NEA Center for Education Technology, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036. Check out www.nea.org/cet for more questions from beginners and answers from the experts.

My favorite Web site . . .

A 'Revolting' Alphabet (**www.libsci.sc.edu/miller/York.htm**) lists Revolutionary War Web sites appropriate for fourth and fifth graders, as well as a scavenger hunt activity.

Lois Rubino, fourth grade teacher, Glen Ridge, New Jersey

Wired Classroom

Hunting Treasure on the Web

Middle schoolers in our small town at the end of the road are looking forward this fall to competing against teams from across the nation in the Software Publishers Association's CyberSurfari.

An online treasure hunt, CyberSurfari lets kids explore 100 Web sites over a month—or, school teams can compete for cash and prizes by racing through the Web to solve 100 clues.

We start promoting CyberSurfari the first week of school, grabbing students' attention with the mention of pizza, pop, and the chance to stay the night in school.

As the CyberSurfari date gets closer, we give students a practice round of 10 questions. Those who find the answers the quickest are selected for our three five-member teams, while others are chosen to be team "runners" during the competition.

When the race officially begins, the kids go nuts. They talk back and forth, sharing victories, answers, and support. Last year, they worked non-stop for more than 10 hours—and they hardly noticed that they were learning a great amount.

This year's CyberSurfari begins October 20. Go to www.spa.org/cybersurfari to get ready.

John Bushell
Media specialist/librarian
Homer, Alaska

Building a Political Party

To help eleventh and twelfth graders in my American government course understand how political parties develop their stands on issues, I divide them into groups of five, each designated as a political party, and ask them to prepare a party platform.

Students are assigned readings and look up party platforms on the Internet. The party chair leads a mini-convention in the construction of the platform planks and the identification of the party philosophy—liberal, moderate, conservative, etc.

In writing their party platform, students must consider a variety of issues, such as budget, taxes, environment, and education. Each student must prepare a three- to five-page position statement on a platform plank of his or her choice, and each group makes presentations on its party platform and philosophy.

For my detailed lesson plan, including online resources on political parties, go to encarta.msn.com/schoolhouse.

Jim Creighton
Chair, history department
Seattle, Washington

Following the Iditarod

We read and discuss the Scott O'Dell novel *Black Star, Bright Dawn*—about an Eskimo girl who takes her father's place in the Iditarod dogsled race—in conjunction with the annual running of the race in March.

From the Iditarod Web site (www.Iditarod.com), students each choose a musher and follow the racers' daily and hourly standings. Students chart their mushers' progress by moving paper sleds on a bulletin board in our classroom. Some students even E-mail their mushers.

We also follow Iditarod coverage on CNN's and *USA Today*'s Web sites.

Connie Neary
Fifth grade teacher
Oviedo, Florida

Documenting a Field Trip

When my first grade class went on a field trip to the local hospital, I took along a digital camera to capture the experience electronically.

After our trip, we downloaded the pictures onto the computer, and students wrote a sentence about what was going on in each picture. I shared the keyboard with most of the children, so they also got some computer training.

The children loved seeing themselves on the computer screen—and best of all, there was no waiting for film developing!

I plan to use these pictures next year to prepare students for the field trip.

Amy Meloche
First grade teacher
Sykesville, Maryland

Want a weekly tip on using technology? Subscribe to the Wired Classroom E-mail list. Just send an E-mail to ***join-etoolsweekly@list.nea.org*** *(no subject or message needed).*

My favorite software . . .

The *Dr. Brain* CD-ROM series (**Sierra, 800/757-7707, $19.95 each**) challenges students to use all their intelligences when solving brain-teasers that cover all academic, musical, and visual arts disciplines.

Jane Carlson-Pickering, multiple intelligences and technology coordinator/teacher, West Kingston, Rhode Island

Friendly User

A New View on Writing

Videoconferencing with mentors has made kids eager to revise, revise, revise.

Who:
Florence McGinn, English teacher
Hunterdon Central High School
Flemington, New Jersey

E-mail:
fmcginn@star.hcrhs.hunterdon.k12.nj.us

Inspiration:
When McGinn wanted to find mentors to help students with their writing, she didn't let distance limit her.

Instead, she turned to videoconferencing technology—and now her 50 honors writing and literature students work across the miles with students from Rider University in Lawrenceville, New Jersey, using a combination of video, voice, and Internet tools.

McGinn's students and their mentors can talk to each other as they sit at computers, thanks to microphones and speakers. Small cameras perched on their computers transmit their live pictures to each other's screens.

The subject of their conversations is the Hunterdon student's latest short story, poem, or essay, also displayed on the screen. The student and mentor can both revise and rewrite the work from their keyboards.

"Videoconferencing started as a way to extend the written word," says McGinn, whose classroom innovations led *Technology & Learning* magazine to name her 1998 Teacher of the Year.

"I'm a published poet myself," McGinn continues, "and I wanted the kids to have a richer experience with words. I also wanted them to have a sense of audience. So I designed the course around that, and we were lucky to have the technology that meshed it all together."

Three computer stations in McGinn's classroom are equipped with the Intel ProShare software and hardware that allows for videoconferencing. The biggest expense isn't equipment, she says. It's the high-speed connection—at least an ISDN line—required to carry the images and sound over the Internet.

McGinn's students upload their writing to a password-protected Web site, and then E-mail their mentors to arrange a weekly work session.

"We wondered if the technology would be transparent enough, if you would be able to make a human connection," McGinn notes. "Our students have never met their mentors in person, but it's working out beautifully. They've become great friends."

Lesson:
By the end of the semester, each student has assembled a hefty portfolio of diverse writing.

"As I monitor videoconferences," McGinn says, "I'll recognize manuscripts that students have already handed in and received a grade for—and they're still working with a mentor to polish it."

In fact, she says, the most important lesson students learn from working with their mentors isn't structure or mechanics, but "a sense that writing is a process, that they should go through many, many drafts and not be afraid to revise their work."

For More Information

Some of Hunterdon students' writing ends up in Electric Soup, *an award-winning online literary magazine that McGinn started in 1995. Ten volumes are available on the Web, featuring the work of students, alumni, staff, and community members.*

Want to take a look? Point your Web browser to www.hcrhs.hunterdon.k12.nj.us/esoup/welcome.html.

"For so long, kids have been taught that you hand in something, get a grade, and you're finished," McGinn adds. "For that attitude to change is like night and day.

"And they want to take risks now. They'll ask, 'Do I have to write so stiffly? Can I use extended metaphor in my college application essay?'"

Click:
"So often I hear people ask, 'Is technology good or bad?'" McGinn says. "That's like asking if a hammer is a good or bad tool. It's what you do with technology that counts."

Rachelle Omenson

Thanks to computer-top cameras and mikes, New Jersey teacher Florence McGinn and her students can see and hear a college student mentor—and they all can work collaboratively to revise a writing project right on the screen.

New & Noteworthy

Web Guide
The Busy Educator's Guide to the World Wide Web, a teacher-authored publication, lists educational resource links by grade level, tips on searching, and information on how to build a Web page—as well as in-depth "virtual tours" of useful Web sites. $14.95 plus $5 s&h. To order, visit www.Glavac.com or contact NIMA Systems, Suite 433, 3560 Pine Grove Ave., Port Huron, MI 48060-1958.

School Info on the Web
A new Web site, SchoolNotes.com, allows educators to post school information on the Internet without having to know HTML coding.

After registering online, educators and school leaders can post calendars, spelling words, and homework assignments—for free.

To find out more, go to www.schoolnotes.com.

Web Site Competition
ThinkQuest is an annual competition for students ages 12-19 who work in teams to create educational Web sites. More than $1 million in scholarships and cash is awarded each year.

Go to www.thinkquest.org for contest details—as well as to browse more than 1,000 student-created learning tools that have been developed for ThinkQuest.

Curriculum Available
The Agency for Instructional Technology has recently developed The Learning Odyssey, a complete one-year curricula for grades 4-9, delivered entirely over the Internet.

To find out more, go to www.tlo.net or call 800/457-4509.

Talk to Us

Have a nifty classroom tip or lesson plan that uses technology? E-mail a description (under 200 words, please!) to **wiredclassroom@list.nea.org**.

Is there a Web site, CD-ROM, or piece of software you can't live without? E-mail your favorites—and why you love them—to **myfavoritetech@list.nea.org**.

Or send your responses by regular mail to *NEA Today*, or by Fax to 202/822-7206, or through the Web at www.nea.org/cet.

Respondents published here will receive a sparkling *NEA Today* mug!

POLITICAL BOSS, NEA-Style.

Meet Maureen Marshall, a 'political boss' who's never cut a deal in a smoke-filled room. Maureen has never even smoked a stogie.

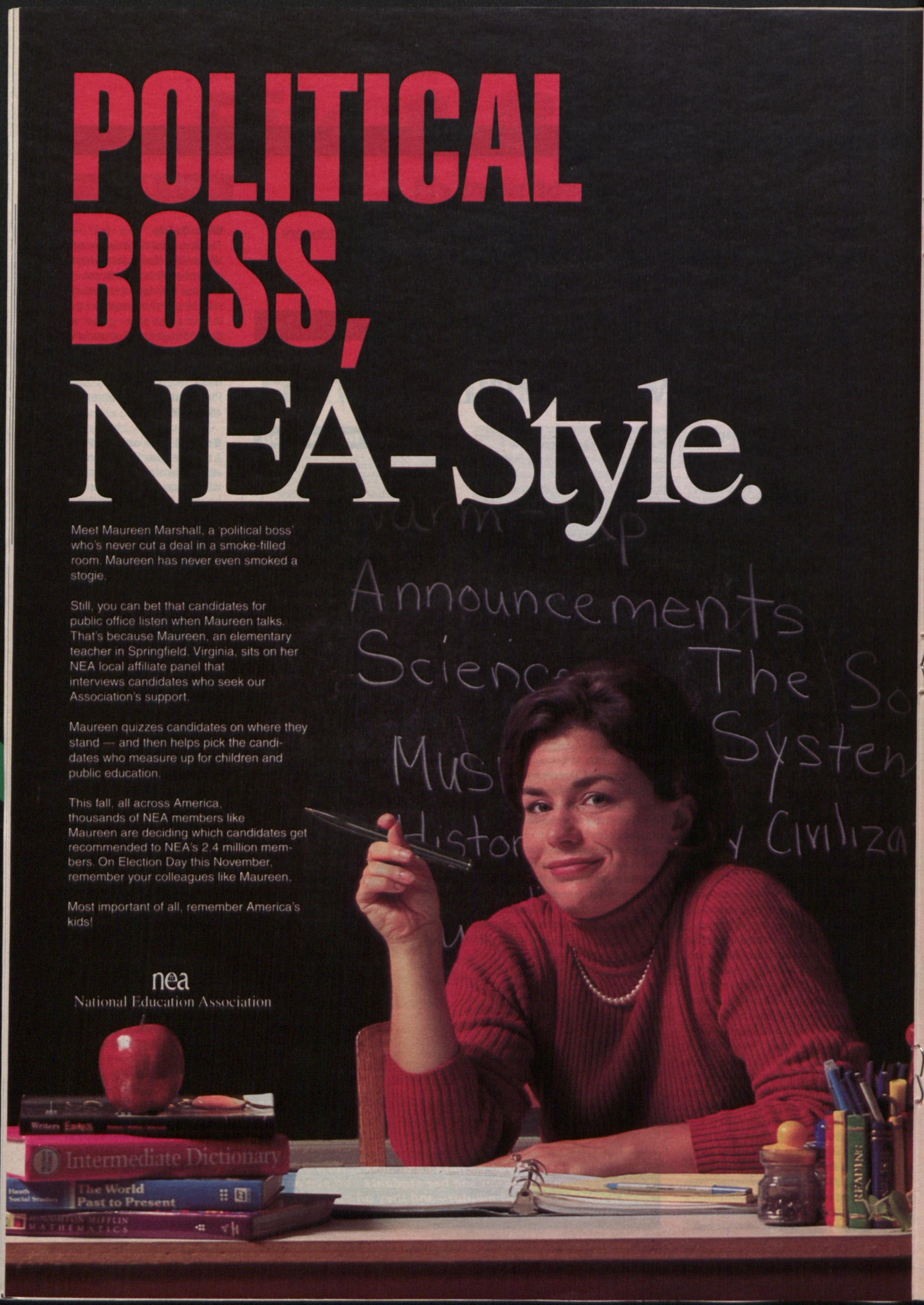
Still, you can bet that candidates for public office listen when Maureen talks. That's because Maureen, an elementary teacher in Springfield, Virginia, sits on her NEA local affiliate panel that interviews candidates who seek our Association's support.

Maureen quizzes candidates on where they stand — and then helps pick the candidates who measure up for children and public education.

This fall, all across America, thousands of NEA members like Maureen are deciding which candidates get recommended to NEA's 2.4 million members. On Election Day this November, remember your colleagues like Maureen.

Most important of all, remember America's kids!

nea
National Education Association



ESP Extra

A Job Well Done

Maintaining a Quality Environment

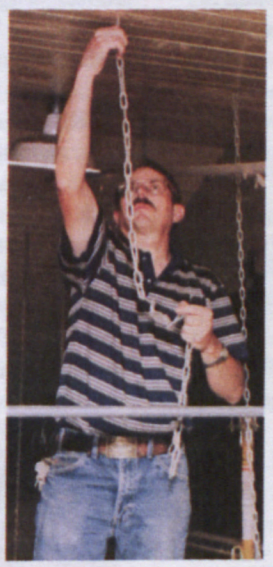
People wait in line for this maintenance worker's services. But, for him, the kids always come first.

Name:
Sandy Wilson

Job title:
Maintenance worker

Experience:
15 years

NEA local affiliate:
Kenowa Hills (Michigan) Support Staff Association



What I do:
It's hard to describe my day past the time I open up the high school and take care of maintenance requests that came in the day before.

This job offers lots of variety—clearing snow from building walkways, spraying weeds, doing minor electrical repairs, installing switches and lights, plumbing, spill clean-up, and maintaining boilers to keep them running efficiently and lasting as long as they should.

And, thanks to a bond issue, our maintenance department is doing a lot of renovation. Recently, for instance, we built a fireproof wall in an elementary school boiler room, painted the school's gym, replaced the lights, and put in another ceiling.

What people don't understand about my job:
Sometimes people don't understand why they can't have something done as quickly as they want. We usually have a long list of things to work on—and we try to get to things as soon as possible. But if an emergency comes up, we handle that right away, and something else may get moved back temporarily.

My credentials:
I have state certification in both commercial pesticide application and asbestos abatement, plus a basic boiler operator's license.

Continuing education:
I take an annual refresher course in asbestos abatement to maintain certification. And I'm now learning how to control the buildings' new computerized heating and cooling system—from both a laptop and desktop computer.

A challenge I have met:
My department does a good job with the resources we have. We're not wasteful. We have completed a couple of projects lately that the district could have bid out. By doing them internally, we have saved the district a ton of money.

For instance, we completely remodeled a small building once used for storage, enabling a pre-primary special ed program to move in—freeing up more space in some elementary schools.

How I help students achieve:
I maintain a clean, safe environment conducive to learning. It's hard for anyone to learn if the roof is leaking, it's too hot or cold, or half of your toilets don't work.

How I team with teachers:
I get along well with teachers. They respect me and I respect them. And as the ESP local president, I'm proud of the fact that a single bargaining team negotiates both the teacher and ESP contracts—and that the teachers' local president and I meet with the district superintendent and business manager once a month to work out problems.

Tips from Sandy Wilson

Treat Kids With Respect

On dealing with kids:
"If it weren't for the kids, we wouldn't have jobs. Everything we do is directly or indirectly because of the kids. So treat kids with respect. Treat them as individuals, and work with them that way. And don't try to be a know-it-all or use a condescending tone."

On dealing with other school employees:
"It's somewhat like the golden rule—treat others the way you'd like them to treat you. After all, we're all there for the kids, and we all have to work together—everybody on staff, plus parent groups. This is teamwork, not just something we do by ourselves."

Photographs by Jennifer Giesey

Michigan maintenance worker Sandy Wilson helps save his school district money by doing renovations himself.

News You Can Use

ESP Keeping Kids Safe, Healthy, and Well-Nourished

Bus Safety

Want help in getting the message across about school bus safety rules?

Kids, the School Bus, and You, a colorful six-panel brochure published by the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration, contains straightforward safety tips for motorists, children, and parents.

For up to 50 free copies, call NHTSA at 800/424-9393 or write to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 400 7th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20590.

You can also download the brochure from the NHTSA Web site at www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/buses/.

Animal-Lovers, Beware!

Is that hamster in the classroom a health hazard?

According to a recent article in *School Health Alert*, reptiles—especially turtles—pose the greatest classroom risk of "zoonosis," or animal-born disease, while small mammals—like hamsters—pose the least risk.

To read the article online, go to www.schoolnurse.com/new_med_info/zoonosis.html.

School Health Alert, a monthly newsletter for school nurses, has more than 7,000 readers. To subscribe ($34/year), use the subscription form on the Web at www.schoolnurse.com or write to School Health Alert, P.O. Box 150127, Nashville, TN 37215.

Virtual Cafeteria

Want to know what the San Francisco school district feeds to 37,000 students every day?

Check out the district's Student Nutrition Services Web site at www.sfusd.k12.ca.us/programs/studnutr/sfusd.htm.

The site includes menus, downloadable applications for reduced price meals (in five languages), links to other food and nutrition sites, and even games for kids to play.

Online 'MealTalk'

"MealTalk" bills itself as "an electronic discussion group for school food service and child nutrition professionals."

The U.S. Department of Agriculture sponsors this busy E-mail list. Recent postings have dealt with such diverse topics as sloppy joe recipes, environmental issues, and training resources.

To browse list messages or subscribe to the list, go to the "Team Nutrition: Healthy School Meals Resource System" Web page: www.usda.gov/cnpp/team.htm.

Transportation Trades

The Transportation Trades Department (TTD) of the AFL-CIO represents the interests of several million aviation, rail, transit, trucking, highway, and longshore workers before Congress, the executive branch, and independent government agencies.

While some of the issues these union members deal with are different from the issues school transportation workers encounter, others—such as federal licensing regulations—are very much the same.

For more information, visit the TTD Web site at www.ttd.org/index.html. Or contact the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO, 1000 Vermont Ave., N.W., Suite 900, Washington, DC 20005, 202/628-9262.

ESP Helping Kids Learn

ESP Train ESP

The problem may sound familiar.

In Virginia, ESP members said they weren't getting in-service training in the interpersonal skills they needed everyday on the job, and they weren't being trained by people who understood ESP issues.

The solution: train ESP members to deliver the necessary training themselves. That's the route that the Virginia Education Association took when it created an ESP Training Cadre last year.

Paraeducator Susan Cooper, a 14-year veteran in the Fairfax Head Start program, and fellow NEA member Jackie Dilley are now both trainers themselves.

Susan Cooper & Jackie Dilley

Both have already trained dozens of ESP members in NEA's "Vital Links" program. Cooper says she plans to train more Fairfax ESP this fall and hopes to begin delivering other "people skills" training, such as the NEA "True Colors" program, in the future.

Cooper, who has testified before Congress about violence in the classroom, has a message for other ESP: "One person can make a difference. If we work together, we can make a bigger difference."

For more information about the VEA ESP training cadre, contact Jo Ann Karsch, Virginia Education Association, 166 S. Third St., Richmond, VA 23219, 804/648-5801.

Building a Winning Team

How can teachers and paraprofessionals communicate better, learn from each other, and build a classroom relationship that is beneficial to students?

Paraprofessionals and Teachers: Building a Winning Team is a facilitator's guide for training teachers and paraprofessionals in building a professional alliance for education.

For a free copy, contact your NEA state affiliate. If no copies

Craig Line

Vermont paraeducator Terri Corbett (left) pairs with teachers Sarah Goodwin (center) and Maureen Garber to create a winning team that puts student achievement first.

are available in your state, single copies may be obtained from the NEA ESP Program, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036, 202/822-7131.

Parent News

If you find yourself on the front lines in dealing with students' families, take a look at *Parent News*, a monthly electronic magazine for parents and those who work with parents.

Published by the National Parent Information Network, *Parent News* can be found on the Web at http://npin.org/pnews.html.

Or contact the National Parent Information Network, ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Children's Research Center, 51 Gerty Dr., Champaign, IL 61820-7469, 217/333-1386.

Breaking the Class Ceiling

ESP members interested in becoming teachers may want to check out *Breaking the Class Ceiling: Paraeducator Pathways to Teaching*, from Recruiting New Teachers, Inc.

The report includes a directory of programs and contacts, descriptions of nine programs, and information on major funders involved in the paraeducator-to-teacher movement.

For a copy of the report ($31.95), contact Recruiting New Teachers, Inc., 385 Concord Ave., Suite 103, Belmont, MA 02178, 617/489-6000.

Troubled Kids

Looking for some resources to help your students deal with the challenges they're facing in their lives?

The Bureau for At-Risk Youth publishes and distributes videos, software, and other products for and about at-risk kids. Topics covered include substance abuse, teenage sexuality and pregnancy, violence prevention, conflict resolution, child abuse, and self-esteem.

Contact the Bureau for At-Risk Children, P.O. Box 760, Plainview, New York 11803-0760, 800/999-6884. Send E-mail to info@at-risk.com. Or visit the Web at www.at-risk.com/.

Paraprofessional Resources

Looking for a directory of paraprofessional resources? The Iowa Learning Resource Center has put together a database of paraprofessional books, videos, and other publications.

Contact the Iowa Learning Resource Network, Resource Center, Drake University, 2507 University Ave., Des Moines, IA 50311, 515/271-4164. Or write to the Resource Center for Issues in Special Education, 2507 University Ave., Des Moines, IA 50311.

ESP Keeping Schools Running

Keep It Clean

If your work involves caring for the physical facilities of schools, CineClean Publishing has two periodicals you may find useful.

In-House Connection Magazine addresses issues like workplace safety, equipment evaluations, and strategies to combat privatization of maintenance jobs. It's expensive—six issues per year for $69.95—so get your supervisor to subscribe.

CineClean also publishes a one-page monthly newsletter ($12.95 per year) that covers such topics as customer relations, equipment, and cleaning techniques.

For more information contact CineClean Publishing, HC 35, Box 17, Kenilworth, UT 84529, 801/472-8310. Fax: 801/637-2120. E-mail: Cineclen@castlenet.com.

Roadmap to the Internet

Are you lost on the Information Superhighway? Is your workplace now wired to the Internet? Are computer-savvy students talking to you in what sounds like a foreign language?

If you answered yes to even one of these questions, you may want to check out *Roadmap 96*, a free, easy-to-read, 27-lesson workshop about the Internet.

Now your students won't be the only ones who know about listservs, telnet, FTP, and a host of other exotic terms. You can get *Roadmap 96* on the Web at www.netsquirrel.com/.

Ergonomics

A properly set up computer workstation can make the difference between a pleasant working environment and one that causes eyestrain, stress, and serious musculo-skeletal problems.

Working Safely with Video Display Terminals is a free, 31-page booklet from the Federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

You can get single copies by contacting the U.S. Department of Labor/OSHA, OSHA Publications, P.O. Box 37535, Washington, D.C. 20013-7535. Fax: 202/219-9266. Or you can ask for publication #3092 on the the online order form at www.osha-slc.gov/OCIS/PubRequest/.

You can also get the publication on the Web in HTML format at www.osha-slc.gov/Publications/OSHA3092/osha3092.html, or in Adobe Acrobat format from www.osha-slc.gov/SLTC/ergonomics/publications.html.

Got Answers?

ESP Extra hopes to make it easy for the experts—you—to help one another learn some of the secrets of the trade. So, got answers to these questions?

■ *How good is your in-service training?* In many school districts, support educators have to fight to receive appropriate in-service training. How about yours? Are ESP included with teachers or separate? Are ESP involved in designing and delivering the training? If you have a good in-service program, what makes it work?

■ *Has "welfare reform" come to your school?* New federal welfare laws require people enrolled in the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program to perform public service work to receive benefits.

If your school district is involved in this type of program, *ESP Extra* would like to know your views. Is the program working? What's it like working with workfare participants?

ESP Extra will print some of your responses in a future issue. To send in your ideas, write to ESP Feedback, NEA Publishing, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036 or send E-mail to ESPInput@list.nea.org.

Dennis Caldwell

Custodian David Arnold makes a clean sweep of the schools in Brownstown, Illinois.

Extra Special People

Mark Cavendish, a custodian at Amphitheater High School in Tucson, Arizona, has organized a school-to-work program in which more than 50 students shadow educational support staff—in jobs like custodian, computer aide, secretary, even health inspector.

The program philosophy: If students work for the school rather than fast food restaurants or other businesses, they are more likely to stay in school.

Each week, more than 30 parents—who once felt shut out of the school and the political process—meet to administer this "Jobs for Today's Students" program and discuss accountability.

Cavendish, who gained funding for the program through parent outreach and political organizing, also helped bring the Tucson Literacy Coalition to the high school campus—where more than 250 volunteers assist in ESL adult and family literacy instruction.

That project has since expanded into a "Ready to Read" program, in which high schoolers read to children in local elementary schools.

LaRue Vaughn, head custodian at Etta Dale Junior High in El Reno, Oklahoma, had to polish his interviewing skills lately. That's because Cathy Wells's English class selected LaRue as its subject for a journalism project.

Craig Line

The students questioned Vaughn about his life and career, and thanked him with a dream come true—one night's stay in a luxury hotel suite.

The El Reno school band gave LaRue an additional honor—a service award for his longstanding support of the band program and students.

Says Vaughn: "I try to live life with a smile on my face. Sometimes I think adults forget how much a random act of kindness can do for a person."

Lynnca Perkins (above), a paraeducator at Fairfield (Vermont) Elementary School, has worked closely with her principal and guidance counselor to develop a "structured recess" program—based on the notion that all time at school for kids should be learning time.

Here's how it works: Paraeducators assigned recess duty help channel kids who have violated school rules into structured play at recess time, then pair them with a guidance counselor.

The results: Structured recess has reduced playground disputes and established a connection between recess and Fairfield's academic program.

Donna Johnson, a bookkeeper in the English Department at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, is a person who can never say no when it comes to helping kids.

Johnson was asked by a member of the Faith United Methodist Church in Chicopee to fill in as a Sunday school teacher—even though she is a member of the Catholic faith.

Naturally, she agreed. She is now both a teacher and superintendent of the Sunday school program. Johnson takes her students on field trips and has invested an enormous amount of time in helping them.

Steve Konek, the district head groundskeeper in Coupeville, Washington, says he's held "just about every job known to man." Now he passes his practical experience and insight on to students by coaching a girls' softball team on Whidbey Island—on a field he helped build.

Says Konek: "I coach purely for teaching, about the sport and about life. I believe a key part of education is learning self-discipline, learning self-control, and learning that things don't always go your way—that there are responsibilities, too."

John Goodie, head of security at Mesa (Arizona) High School, promotes positive race relations in his school and in the community, and is often called upon to settle racial disputes at other schools.

Mesa students regard Goodie as a role model—so much so that when this ESP recently won an NEA human and civil rights award, 2,500 young people organized a rally to celebrate.

Want to recognize an ESP member for his or her work with kids in your school or community? Send all the details, along with that individual's name, job title, and town or school district—plus your name and phone number—to ESPInput@list.nea.org or Fax to ESP Extra at 202/822-7206.

Challenge of the Month

What Do You Do When You See a Student Picking on Another Kid?

"First I get the names of both students if I don't know them. Then I try to talk to them separately and together, so that we all get the story right. Hopefully, that helps. If not, I let them know that I'm there any time they want to talk."

—Bonnie Chalfant, bus driver, Gloucester Township, New Jersey

"Our school has a Behavioral Leadership Team (BLT) trained in a new method of handling behavior. All employees are now responsible for helping students maintain proper behavior.

"When an employee sees a student being picked on by other students, that staffer uses strategies developed by the BLT, approaching students in a calm, friendly manner and reminding students of the proper behavior. If that behavior continues, the BLT guidelines give a clearly defined set of consequences to be used, depending on the severity of the problem.

"These guidelines enable all of our staff to work effectively and to consistently achieve the desired behavior."

—Barbara Reedy, secretary, Westside Elementary, Daytona Beach, Florida

"I work in a grade 6-10 alternative education program run for students with disciplinary problems and for those who are emotionally impaired or have a number of different needs.

"When I see a child picking on another, I make him put himself in the other person's situation, and then I find out the reason for the taunting. If it's ethnic or a case of dislike, we talk about it, and I try to get the child to understand the value of diversity.

"We have very few fights, and most of our children get along. We focus on kids' strong points and pair them with other students they don't understand."

—Linda Young, Hill Alternative Education Program, Lansing, Michigan

"When I see a student being picked on, I see it is as my job to immediately bring closure to the negative action by the one student. Going to school is already tough on these kids. Being picked on should not be one of the hurdles."

—Tim Smith, head day custodian, Adler Elementary, Southfield, Michigan

"I try to reason with the kids and get them to talk to each other to find what the differences are. Then we end the discussion with a handshake."

—Sandy Cowgill, custodian Paulsboro, New Jersey

"I work with students with handicaps. I ask kids who tease them how they would like to be handicapped. That makes them think about it, and the teasing is never repeated."

—Shirley Bailey, paraprofessional, Dwight Rich Middle School, Lansing, Michigan

"Our peer mediation process usually works. If it doesn't, or if lots of kids complain about the behavior of one child, we do an internal investigation to get to the bottom of the problem—and see if it can be taken care of at school."

—U.T. Muse, security officer, Flint, Michigan

Got an Answer?

How do you encourage a quiet student to overcome shyness? Send your reply, along with your name, job title, and town or school district to ESPInput@list.nea.org or Fax it to ESP Extra at 202/822-7206.

Rights Watch

Savvy About Cybersmut?

Courts aren't clear—yet—on what rights students have on the Web. Here's how to protect kids from surfing in bad spots.

Ted Pitts

What's the difference between "www.whitehouse.gov" and "www.whitehouse.com"?

One is an official government Web site where students can E-mail the President. The other is a "cybersmut" site that's equally accessible to students.

As an increasing number of schools connect to the Internet, concerns are escalating about students' ability to access inappropriate materials from the Internet at school.

But where do you draw the line between protecting students and quashing First Amendment rights?

To date, the courts haven't addressed this question. Last year, however, the U.S. Supreme Court did recognize the Internet as a medium of "speech" entitled to the highest level of First Amendment protection in the landmark decision *Reno* v. *ACLU*.

It remains to be seen how the courts will carry this ruling over into the classroom. So what can cyber-savvy schools do now to make the Internet a safer and more productive learning environment for students?

Many are developing student "acceptable use policies."

What is an acceptable use policy?

It's a set of guidelines for student use of the Internet and other school-provided computer network services, such as E-mail. A school's existing code of conduct should provide the framework for this policy.

The courts have yet to deal head-on with the issue of public school restrictions on student speech in cyberspace. But it's likely that they will give schools more discretion in fashioning student acceptable use policies.

To develop an acceptable use policy, a school should involve teachers, school librarians, media specialists, administrators, parents, and students. A school should also consult with a technology staffer and legal counsel.

What are the key elements of an acceptable use policy?

It should contain a preamble, a definition section, a policy statement, an acceptable uses section, an unacceptable uses section, and a section on violations and sanctions.

The preamble explains the reasons for the acceptable use policy and describes its adoption process. A definition section defines key words in the policy. A policy statement explains what computer network services are covered and how students can access these services.

The section on violations and sanctions explains to students how and where they can report violations of the acceptable use policy and identifies appropriate sanctions.

Schools should strive to provide universal access to students, but they will probably want to adopt different conditions for access based on grade level. Schools may also want to condition access on completion of a "computer responsibility class."

Acceptable use policy provisions also often address copyright infringement, plagiarism, privacy, student safety, and commercial use of the Internet.

So what goes into the section on "acceptable uses"?

Many schools believe that student use of the Internet should be limited to "educational purposes," which can be defined narrowly to include only curricular activities or more broadly to include educational research, career development, and extracurricular activities.

What are some "unacceptable uses"?

Each school or district needs to determine what's unacceptable. To do that:

- Identify the kind of sites, if any, that are off limits to students. Many schools believe that acceptable use policies should restrict access to sites that are sexually explicit or promote racism, sexism, or hatred based on religion, national origin, or sexual orientation. In addition, student access to sites promoting illegal activities such as drug use is often restricted.

These restrictions may raise First Amendment concerns (see sidebar). Schools should adopt restrictions that are related to legitimate educational concerns, are age-appropriate, and provide clear guidance to students.

- Identify the kind of information, if any, that students are prohibited from transmitting or posting. Many schools prohibit transmitting or posting information that is sexually explicit, is profane, or defames or harasses others. And this includes E-mail.
- Identify behavior deemed destructive to the network. Most schools prohibit behavior that is harmful to the school network like spreading computer viruses, overloading the network, engaging in "spamming" (intentionally sending an annoying message to a large number of people), or "hacking" (intentionally breaking into unauthorized computer network areas).

Where can I get more information?

Visit NEA's Web site at www.nea.org/cet/BRIEFS/ brief12.html.

—Cynthia M. Chmielewski
NEA Office of General Counsel

First Amendment Considerations

To date, the courts haven't tackled the question whether students have a First Amendment right to access inappropriate Web sites while using school-provided computer network services.

The few existing "cyberlaw" decisions deal with adult free speech rights.

For example, in *Urofsky* v. *Allen*, university professors challenged a Virginia law prohibiting state employees from using government computers to access sexually explicit materials on the Internet.

Such materials included art and literature with sexual themes, and resources on sexual disease and sexual assault. A federal court held that the law violated the professors' free speech rights.

Similarly, in *Mainstream Loudoun v. Board of Trustees* of the Loudoun County Library, adult patrons challenged a Virginia public library's use of X-Stop software to block pornography on all library computers. The patrons argued that the library's use of the software was like "removing books from the shelves" of the Internet and a violation of the First Amendment.

In a pre-trial decision, the federal court ruled that the library can't use the blocking software unless it meets the highest level of constitutional scrutiny—a ruling that places a tough legal burden on the library.

Significantly, the court also emphasized that its ruling applied only to public libraries, not public schools—and that the ruling involved the rights of adults, not minor students. According to the court, "[T]he factors which justified giving high school libraries broad discretion to remove materials . . . are not present in this case."

This distinction is important because the Supreme Court has made clear in other contexts that public schools are special places and "the constitutional rights of students in public school[s] are not automatically coextensive with the rights of adults in other settings."

So whether students will be able to wave the First Amendment to gain unreined access to Web sites remains to be seen. For now, it seems prudent to hold students to the letter of the "law" laid down in a good acceptable use policy.

—C.M.C.

Your Student's Creation Could be Disney Animation!

CREATE STORY MAGIC℠ CONTEST

©Disney

Disney Channel's "Create Story Magic" Contest gives kids the chance to have their original stories animated by Disney!

Here's a unique writing contest sure to inspire your students' imaginations while developing their creative writing skills.

Grand Prize winner: The winning story will be animated by Disney and aired on Disney Channel and Toon Disney.

Finalists: Five kids receive a full-color Disney illustration of their stories.

School Prizes: Disney Children's Publishing will provide a $500 collection of books to the Grand Prize winner's and each finalist's school library.

Visit www.storymagic.com or stop by any Target Store on September 26 (Teacher Appreciation Day) to get a free "Create Story Magic Teacher's Kit." Kit includes an innovative writing and reading curriculum for grades K-6, along with an official entry form.

Contest open to kids aged 6-12.

TOON Disney

Disney CHANNEL

TARGET

The Disney Publishing Group

No Purchase Necessary. Void where prohibited. Open to legal residents of U.S., 6 to 12 years old as of 12/31/98, who are not family members of employees of The Walt Disney Company, The Dayton Hudson Corporation and their affiliated companies. **To Enter:** On 8 1/2" x 11" paper, type in English an original story of 750 to 1,000 words that contains characters and situations created solely by the entrant. Complete Official Entry Form and mail with original story to: "Create Story Magic℠" Contest, P.O. Box 1379, Hollywood, CA 90078-1379 postmarked by 12/31/98 and received by 1/7/99. Or you can email your entry. See www.storymagic.com for full details. **Winners/Prizes:** (6) Finalists—2 from each of the following age groups: 6-7 yrs., 8-9 yrs., and 10-12 yrs. Grand Prize winner will be selected from (6) finalists. (5) Finalists will receive color illustration of story and book package to finalist's school. (1) Grand Prize Winner will receive a trip for 4 to Disneyland and The Walt Disney Studios, and a version of story produced by The Walt Disney Company (at sole discretion of Disney). See Official Rules for complete details. Official rules may be obtained at participating Target stores, at www.storymagic.com, or by sending a self-addressed, stamped envelope to the aforementioned address.

Health

New Path for Aggressive Boys

Dr. Dorothy Otnow Lewis, author of Guilty by Reason of Insanity: A Psychiatrist Explores the Minds of Killers *($25, Fawcett Columbine), is professor of psychiatry at the New York University School of Medicine and clinical professor at the Yale University Child Study Center. She spoke with Rena Large of the NEA Health Information Network on male aggression.*

Ted Pitts

Are boys more aggressive than girls?

Yes. Much. Males in our country are about nine times as homicidal as females.

Male aggression cannot be entirely explained sociologically. In most animal species, males are more aggressive. Androgens affect brain structure and function. Female mice placed in utero between two males are more aggressive than other females, ostensibly because of greater exposure in utero to male hormones.

But most boys and most men are not violent. Unfortunately, mental illness and neurological impairment in boys and men are more likely to be manifested in aggressive behaviors.

How can we best help these overaggressive boys?

So many boys who are aggressive but have potentially treatable disorders are dismissed as simply conduct disordered or incarcerated rather than diagnosed and treated properly.

Conduct disorder is often a lazy diagnosis. Educators and therapists must learn to recognize the fact that almost every serious psychiatric disorder of childhood can manifest itself by aggressive behavior.

Disturbed children are rarely articulate about their psychological pain and have only a small repertoire of behaviors with which to show hurt. One of the most common causes of repeated aggressive behaviors in children is the paranoid misperception of being endangered or disrespected.

One cannot simply dismiss aggressive behavior as being "bad."

Can schools keep aggressive behavior from developing?

Educators are in excellent positions to recognize when children are headed for trouble.

For example, when children of normal intelligence have trouble concentrating, fail to do their work, and get into hassles with peers and teachers, they are telling you that they are having difficulty coping with some sorts of stressors. The stressors may be intrinsic, environmental, or a combination of both.

Negative changes in student performance or school attendance are also clues that something is going wrong in that student's life.

Once a troubled student is spotted, what then?

Unfortunately, when students—especially boys—are referred for psychological evaluation, these kinds of behavioral changes are often dismissed as simply oppositional behaviors or as attention-deficit hyperactivity, and medication alone is prescribed.

These kinds of behaviors require careful, sophisticated assessments—not just of the child's functioning, but also of the stresses within the household.

Can we help students who have already come in violent conflict with the law?

Of course we can. When the psychological, medical, educational, and family vulnerabilities contributing to a child's aggression are addressed, behavior improves. Pills alone won't do it.

And children and adolescents with problems with aggression usually need ongoing treatment and support systems. Even the finest multifaceted treatment for aggressive children will fail it if ceases after a year or two and the child is abandoned once more.

Our society needs to find effective ways of supporting and sustaining such children so that they can acquire the education and life skills to function as independent adults.

Resources

■ The Benton Foundation Kids Campaigns Web site provides information on fostering children's mental health and development and providing adequate treatment for problems. The site also serves as an information center for educators, parents, community leaders, and other children's advocates, providing Internet links and documents on community action to protect children. Visit the Web at www.kidscampaigns.org.

■ NEA's *Safe Schools Manual* reviews the research on school violence and offers detailed guidelines on how the school, the family, and the community can work together to make schools safe havens for learning. For a free copy, visit the Web at www.nea.org/issues/safescho/. Or write to NEA Human and Civil Rights, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

■ For a review of new books on raising boys, see page 49 of this issue of *NEA Today*.

From the Network

The NEA Health Information Network suggests the following helpful resources.

The Danger of Steroids

Young people who use steroids to improve their appearance or their athletic performance are often unaware that they could also suffer temporary infertility, heart disease, or a psychotic episode as a result. Female or adolescent steroid users face an even longer list of dangers. In *The Steroids Game*, Charles Yesalis and Virginia Cowart examine why young people use steroids, the effect of steroids, and how to prevent and treat steroid use. 200 pp., $16.95 from Human Kinetics, P.O. Box 5076, Champaign, IL 61825-5076, 800/747-4457. E-mail: humank@hkusa.com.

Learn Not To Burn

Did you know that one in five Americans will develop skin cancer? Or that people get 80 percent of their lifetime sun exposure before the age of 18? The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is currently developing the SunWise School Program to teach elementary children how to practice safe sun habits. To learn more about SunWise or to receive information about the health effects of UV radiation, contact the EPA at 800/296-1996 or visit the Web at www.epa.gov/ozone or www.epa.gov/sunwise.

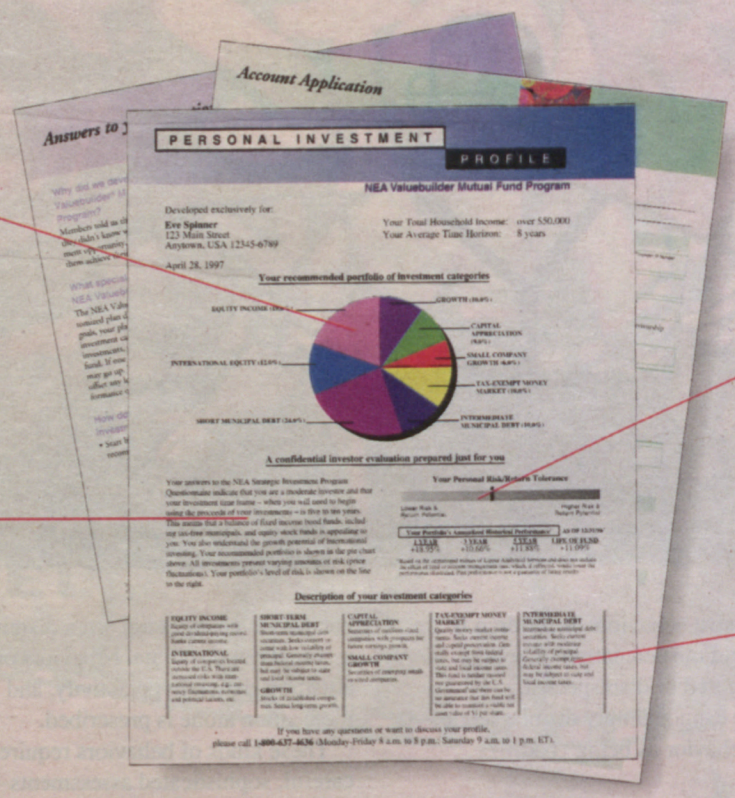
Teacher Talk

Teacher Talk is a publication for pre-service and secondary education teachers that's distributed as a series of World Wide Web documents. Published by the Center for Adolescent Studies at the School of Education, Indiana University, Teacher Talk is on the Web at http://education.indiana.edu/cas/tt/tthmpg.html.

Free Health Info

The National Health Information Center offers a reference list through its Web site that provides toll-free numbers—and links to Web sites—for information on hundreds of health issues and diseases. Visit the Web at http://nhic-nt.health.org/Scripts/Tollfree.cfm.

Need a plan to help you invest in mutual funds?


Your recommended investment categories
An evaluation of you as an investor
Your comfort level with investment risk
A description of your recommended investment categories
Account Application
PERSONAL INVESTMENT PROFILE
NEA Valuebuilder Mutual Fund Program
Developed exclusively for:
Eve Spinner
123 Main Street
Anytown, USA 12345-6789
Your Total Household Income: over $50,000
Your Average Time Horizon: 8 years
April 28, 1997
Your recommended portfolio of investment categories
A confidential investor evaluation prepared just for you
Your Personal Risk/Return Tolerance
Description of your investment categories
If you have any questions or want to discuss your profile, please call 1-800-637-4636 (Monday-Friday 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Saturday 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. ET).

The NEA Personal Investment Plan

We'll mail it to you. Free.

Exclusively for NEA members and their families–the **NEA Valuebuilder® Mutual Fund Program** gives you everything you need to make your money work for you. Whether you're saving for a home, college tuition or a comfortable retirement, we'll custom-tailor a mutual fund investment plan–complete with recommended investment categories and a wide range of well-known mutual funds.*

All you have to do to get started is answer a brief questionnaire. Your responses will be computer-analyzed**–free of charge–to develop a **Personal Investment Plan** that you can easily put into action. So don't wait. Call today for your free questionnaire. The sooner you get started, the sooner you'll help make your money work for you.

Call toll free, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (or Saturday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.) ET for your free questionnaire.

1-800-637-4636

NEA Valuebuilder® Mutual Fund Program

*If you open an account, an annual investment advisory fee for the program will apply.

**Software developed in conjunction with Ibbotson Associates, a financial software, data and consulting firm.

Investment advice reflected in the Personal Investment Plan is offered by NEA's MBC Investor Services Company, a Registered Investment Advisor. Related investment advice on the mutual funds available as part of the NEA Valuebuilder Mutual Fund Program is offered through Nationwide Investment Services Corporation, Member NASD. Securities are offered through Nationwide Investment Svcs. Corporation, Member NASD (in the state of Michigan). For more complete information on the mutual funds available, including charges and expenses, please contact Nationwide Investment Services Corporation at (800) 634-0025 to request prospectuses. Please read the prospectuses carefully before you invest or send any money.

MFNT1098

Heads Up!

TV Tips

World Animal Day Specials

Animal Planet, Saturday, October 3, 9-11 p.m. ET. The Year of the Tiger is celebrated with two documentary specials. *Life with Big Cats* traces actress Tippi Hedren's work to protect animals at a wildlife sanctuary. *Tiger Hunt: The Elusive Sumatran* contains first-ever footage of this rare species in the wild and reviews the work being done to save it from extinction. Rated TV-G.

Out of the Box

Disney Channel, premiering Monday, October 5, check local listings for times. This new, daily, half-hour series focuses on the adventures of a group of children and their caregivers as they sing, dance, play, tell stories, and do hands-on art activities using household objects. Rated TV-Y.

The Magic School Bus

FOX Kids Network, beginning Monday, October 5, check local listings. This half-hour, animated science series, with the voice of Lily Tomlin as science teacher Mrs. Frizzle, finds a new home on the FOX Kids Network this month. For companion materials, check the Web at www.scholastic.com/MagicSchoolBus.

Stage to Screen

Turner Classic Movies, Monday, October 5-15, 6 a.m. and noon ET. This year's TCM BY THE BOOK features eight classic films, including *Julius Caesar* and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof.* Enrolled teachers can tape and use the films in class and get free curriculum guides. For details, send a Fax with school name, contact, phone, and address to 770/739-7085 or visit http://tcm.turner.com/by_the_book/.

Cold War

CNN, Sundays, 8-9 p.m. ET. This 24-part documentary series continues with episodes covering the Iron Curtain, the Marshall Plan, Berlin, and Korea. On the Web at http://CNN.com/ColdWar.

Africans in America

PBS, Monday-Thursday, October 19-22, 8-9 p.m. ET. This four-part series opens in the 16th century with the slave trade on Africa's Gold Coast and concludes on the eve of the American Civil War in 1861. For a teacher's guide, write to WGBH Educational Print & Outreach, 125 Western Ave., Boston, MA 02134. More on the Web at www.pbs.org/africansinamerica.

Scientific American Frontiers

PBS, Wednesday, October 7, 8-9 p.m. ET, check local listings. This science series, hosted by Alan Alda, returns with "Science in Paradise," a journey to the Caribbean to observe the turtles on the top beaches, Montserrat's volcanic habits, and the corals of St. John. For a free classroom guide for grades 5 and up, call 800/315-5010. On the Web: www.pbs.org/saf.

Transitions

Court TV, Saturday, October 10, 7-8 p.m. ET. Kids, ages 10 to 15, discuss issues ranging from sexual promiscuity to violence to self-image.

Crime and Punishment

NBC, Sunday, October 11, 9-11 p.m. ET. This film, based on Fyodor Dostoevsky's 19th century novel, tells Raskolnikov's famous story. Contact your local NBC affiliate for a free study guide.

John Glenn, American Hero

PBS, Wednesday, October 28, 8-9 p.m. ET, check local listings. This program chronicles the life of astronaut and U.S. Senator John Glenn on the eve of his return to space and explores the space challenges of the 21st century.

Cousin Skeeter

Nickelodeon, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8:30-9 p.m. ET. This series follows shy, 13-year-old Bobby, as he adjusts to his new home in New York City and deals with outgoing Cousin Skeeter.

Any Day Now

Lifetime, Tuesdays, 9-10 p.m. ET. This series focuses on an interracial friendship between two girls growing up in Alabama during the civil rights era. For a teaching guide, go to www.lifetimetv.com or www.kidsnet.org.

Star-Spangled Banner Project

The History Channel, October, check local listings. This documentary, produced with the National Museum of American History, tells the story of the Star-Spangled Banner. For a free teacher's manual (grades K-8) and a study guide (grades 8-12), Fax a request on school letterhead to The History Channel at 212/ 210-1429 or go to www.historychannel.com.

A Will of Their Own

NBC, premiering in October, check local listings. This four-hour miniseries, set against the social and political backdrop of the women's movement in America, follows the lives of four generations of women.

KIDSNET, a national resource for children's media in Washington, D.C., provides these listings. For additional listings and information, check out the KIDSNET Web sites at www.kidsnet.org and www.familyeducation.com/kidsnet.asp.

school stories

Want to know what's *really* happening in America's schools? *School Stories*, produced by NEA and The Learning Channel, offers you an insider's view on tough issues on and off campus. Take note of the new day and time, and don't forget to set your VCR!

The Drive To Teach

Thursday, October 8, 11:30 a.m. ET. An innovative professional development plan in Savannah, Georgia, helps education support staffers who want to become teachers pursue their education.

Class Act

Thursday, October 15, 11:30 a.m. ET. Spend some time with Rhode Island teacher Mary Lee Douin, who uses her singing and theatrical talent to fire up her students' passion for literature.

Second-Chance High

Thursday, October 22, 11:30 a.m. ET. What happens when you mix high school students who were expelled with kids who dropped out and older welfare recipients who are back in school? In Shreveport, Louisiana, the answer is learning—the key is teaching to a variety of different learning styles.

The Struggle for Safety

Thursday, October 29, 11:30 a.m. ET. In schools around the country, it's a daily struggle to keep local gangs from spreading their influence. Find out what educators are doing in Long Beach, California, to overcome the problem.

Plugging into Technology

Thursday, November 5, 11:30 a.m. ET. Five years ago, with the help of a federal grant, a school in one of America's poorest counties joined the technology revolution. Now look at White River High School in South Dakota, where students roam their rural community with cameras and computers, and the school has its own Web page.

Bonus for NEA members: Each episode of *School Stories* is available on video after airing. To order tapes, call the NEA Professional Library at 800/229-4200.

Heads Up

Free or Inexpensive

Mystery Plays

Do your students have a flair for the dramatic? Treat them to *Mystery Plays: 8 Plays for the Classroom*

Based on Stories by Famous Writers. Tom Conklin adapts great tales by Hawthorne, O. Henry, Conan Doyle, and more for kids in grades 4-8. Includes ideas for follow-up activities. $10.95 plus 9 percent s&h (AZ, CA, NC, and WA residents, add sales tax). Contact Scholastic Professional Books, P.O. Box 7502, Jefferson City, MO 65102.

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Peer Support

Find out how teachers are reaching out to their colleagues for advice and support through peer mentoring programs that make students the ultimate beneficiaries. It's all in *Peer Support: Teachers Mentoring Teachers*, the newest title from NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. $8.95 plus s&h for NEA members who order before November 15 and use stock #2913-5-00-FF. To order, call the NEA Professional Library at 800/229-4200.

Space Activities

Explore outer space with booklets, photographs, posters, and ready-to-cut-out pictures that enhance lessons and projects. *Eyewitness Activity File: Space* includes a satellite image of the earth, a photo of the Mercury 7 astronauts, and more. $9.95 plus $3.50 s&h, plus sales tax depending on your state. Contact DK Publishing, Inc. at 888/342-5357.

Cool Science

If you want ideas for making science exciting, accessible, and relevant, you'll want to add *Making Science Cool* to your personal library. This new addition to the *What Research Says to the Teacher* series also presents strategies for changing students' negative attitudes toward science. $4.50 plus s&h for NEA members. Stock #1099-X-00-FF. To order, call the NEA Professional Library at 800/229-4200.

More Free Stuff

Check out *Free Materials for Schools and Libraries*, a journal providing listings of free resources by topic, plus information about how to get them. $17 for five issues per year prepaid, $20 if billed. Contact Free Materials for Schools and Libraries, P.O. Box 34069, Dept. 349, Seattle, WA 98124, 604/689-1568. Fax: 604/689-1767. On the Web: www.connaughted.com.

Special Needs Students

In *Just Kids: Visiting a Class for Children with Special Needs* (Dutton Children's Books) author and photographer Ellen Senisi explores the the emotional and academic challenges in the special needs classroom. Based on a true story, the book includes photographs and a narrative suitable for grades 4 and up. $16.99 plus $2 s&h. Discounts available. Contact Penguin Putnam Inc. Order Editing, P.O. Box 999, Bergenfield, NJ 07621, 800/253-6476.

Heads Up

Children's Books

What makes a great children's book? Find out in *Valerie & Walter's Best Books for Children: A Lively, Opinionated Guide*, offering recommendations and advice on more than 2,000 books. Covers pre-school through young adult, and includes some for all ages to share. Bonuses: listings by topic, author spotlights, and tips on encouraging kids to read and use libraries. $15 plus $1.50 s&h from Avon Books, P.O. Box 767, Dresden, TN 38225, 800/238-0658.

Environmental Education

To promote environmental awareness, the Onion Society has compiled *Stories in the Land: A Place-Based Environmental Education Anthology*, featuring first-person accounts and activity suggestions from 12 teachers. The goal: to help students explore urban and rural environments through journals, trail guides, art projects, and poetry. $8 plus $2 s&h. Contact the Orion Society, 195 Main St., Great Barrington, MA 01230, 888/909-6568. Web: www.orionsociety.org

African-American Literature

In *Sing the Sun Up: Creative Writing Ideas from African American Literature*, a book from Teachers & Writers Collaborative, 20 teachers offer suggestions on teaching creative writing using the works of Langston Hughes, James Baldwin, Zora Neale Hurston, Nikki Giovanni, and others. $15.95 plus $5.50 for UPS s&h, $3.50 for 4th-class mail. Contact Teachers & Writers Collaborative, 5 Union Square West, New York, NY 10003, 888-BOOKS-TW. On the Web: www.twc.org

Geography

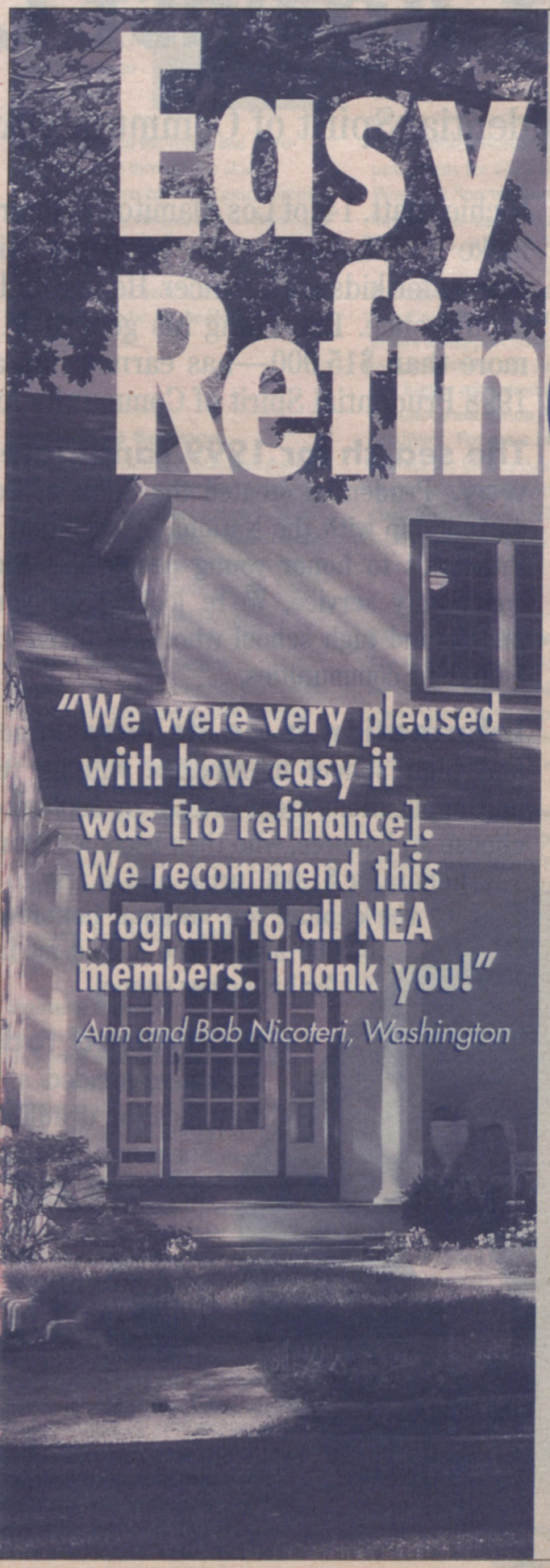
Make the history and geography of the U.S., Canada, and Mexico come to life with these clever lesson plans for kids in grades 3-6. Based on the national geography standards, author Carol Fuhler provides activities inspired by popular books in *Discovering Geography of North America with Books Kids Love*. $17.95 plus $4 s&h. Contact Fulcrum Publishing, 800/992-2908.

Rock On!

Help kids ages 8-13 learn earth science with cooking and art activities and science experiments. The authors present the facts on fossils, volcanoes, earthquakes, and more in *Geology Crafts for Kids: 50 Nifty Projects to Explore the Marvels of Planet Earth*. Great photo illustrations. $14.95 plus $3 s&h. Contact Sterling Publishing Co., 800/367-9692. Ask about the 20 percent discount for schools.

Light Their Way

Turn your primary grades science classroom into a hands-on cooperative learning environment by creating a "discovery center" about light. Check out *The Mysteries of Light*, which outlines activities and includes ready-to-use materials. $11.95 plus $2.50 s&h (in CA, add sales tax). Order #36838. Contact Cuisenaire Dale Seymour Publications, P.O. Box 5026, White Plains, NY 10602, 800/872-1100.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Richie Hiatt Led Over 200 People In The Fight Against Cancer

That's Why He's a Prudential Spirit of Community Award Honoree

"If you really believe in yourself and your cause, others will too."

Richie Hiatt
1998 Prudential Spirit of Community Award Honoree

Richie Hiatt, 14, of Los Alamitos, California, knew he could make a difference when he began his charge to raise money for kids with cancer. He just didn't realize how big a difference. Exceeding his goal of $1,000—and raising more than $15,000—has earned him a place among the 1998 Prudential Spirit of Community Award honorees.

The search for 1999 candidates is now under way. Prudential created the Spirit of Community Awards in partnership with the National Association of Secondary School Principals to honor young people like Richie for outstanding community service. We're looking for young people in every middle and high school who have taken it upon themselves to help their communities.

Information is on its way. Principals in every middle and high school in America will be receiving information and applications from NASSP in September. Every school can choose an honoree, who then becomes a candidate for statewide honors, a $1,000 prize and a trip to Washington, D.C. In the capital, ten national honorees will each receive a $5,000 award and a gold medallion—plus a trophy for his or her school.

Get involved today! Encourage your volunteer-minded students to apply. The application deadline is October 30, 1998. For more information, call the NASSP at **1-800 253-7746 ext. 324.**

Prudential

This program is supported by the American Association of School Administrators, the Council of the Great City Schools, the National Middle School Association, the National School Boards Association, the National School Public Relations Association, Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. and the National 4-H Council. The Prudential Insurance Company of America, 751 Broad Street, Newark, NJ 07102-3777.

Heads Up

Events

World Teachers' Day

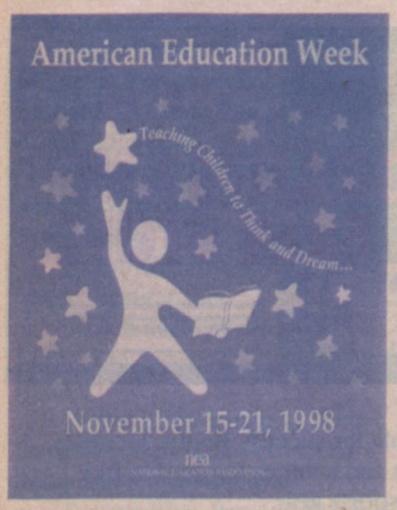
Education International and UNESCO are sponsoring World Teachers' Day on October 5 to honor the 50 million people who "do the world's most important work." For details, check out EI's site on the Web at www.ei-ie.org/emenunew.htm.

American Education Week

The 77th annual observance of American Education Week is set for November 15-21, 1998. The 1998 theme: "Teaching Children to Think and Dream."

American Education Week is a time-honored opportunity to build and strengthen partnerships between local schools and communities on behalf of students. It's a time for celebrating public education and paying tribute to those who make it work.

The president of each NEA local affiliate has been sent an American Education Week proclamation, celebration ideas, a sample news release, and other materials to help plan a creative week that helps renew, restore, and reinforce the public's support for education. These materials are also on the Web at www.nea.org/aew/.



Big Screen Dinosaurs

Meet the meat-eater. Coming in January to giant IMAX and IMAX 3D screens at major natural history museums, science centers, and aquariums: *T-Rex: Back to the Cretaceous*.

This giant-screen film features the story of a paleontologist's daughter who is magically transported back in time 65 million years to an age when tyrannosaurus rex still lurks in the forest and pterodactyls swoop through the skies.

A companion resource guide focusing on Earth sciences, life sciences and geography, with links to language, arts, and mathematics, is available to teachers who schedule field trips. Full texts will also be on the Web at www.imax.com.

Grants

Innovative Science

The National Science Teachers Association, together with Toyota Motor Sales, USA, Inc. offers grants to K-12 science teachers for innovative science projects. Deadline: mid-January. For more information, check out the NSTA Web site at www.nsta.org.

Target Scholarships

As part of its Take Charge of Education Program, Target plans to give scholarships to teachers who want to continue their education. To qualify for grants of up to $1,500 each, teachers must teach at schools participating in the Target credit card program.

In addition, Target plans to give $1,000 grants to participating schools with successful community outreach programs. For details, call 800/316-6142. On the Web: www.target.com.

Unsung Heroes

Do you know an educator whose innovative methods deserve recognition? Northern Life Insurance Company will give $2,000 to each of 80 finalists, and $25,000 to the first place winner. Deadline: November 2. Contact Citizen's Scholarship Foundation of America, 1505 Riverview Rd., P.O. Box 297, St. Paul, MN 56082, 800/426-7050. On the Web: www.unsungheroes.com/.

Reader's Digest

Reader's Digest honors outstanding teachers and principals who make a difference in the lives of their students with up to 10 awards of $5,000 each, plus $10,000 for each winner's school. Deadline: Early December.

For more information, contact Mary Terry, Reader's Digest American Heroes in Education Award, Pleasantville, New York 10570, 914/244-2030.

Girls Sports

New or existing sports programs that serve middle, junior high, and high schools are eligible for the Tampax Grants for Girls Sports Program.

Funded by the Women's Sports Foundation and Tampax, grants are $500 each and support sports and fitness programs that serve girls ages nine to 18. Deadline: December 4.

For more information, contact Tampax Grants for Girls Sports Program, Women's Sports Foundation, Eisenhower Park, East Meadow, New York, NY 11554, 800/227-3988.

Coca-Cola Grants

The Coca-Cola Foundation provides grants to support education projects, including those that link pre-college and higher education and address early childhood education. There are no deadlines. For more information, contact the Grants Administrator, Coca-Cola Foundation Grants Program, P.O. Drawer 1734, Atlanta, GA 30301, 404/676-2568.

Awards

Elementary Science

The CIBA Exemplary Science Teaching Awards for exemplary science teaching are given to one elementary school teacher, one middle school or junior high teacher, and one senior high school teacher.

Deadline: November 15. For more information, contact the International Reading Association, P.O. Box 8139, Newark, DE 19714, 302/731-1600. E-mail: exec@reading.org.

Elementary Earth Science

You can win a laptop or desktop computer system, $2,500 to purchase earth science materials, and a free trip to the National Science Teachers Association Convention. Apply for the Barrick Goldstrike Exemplary Elementary Earth Science Teaching Award. Deadline: November 16.

Contact NSTA Awards Programs, 1840 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, VA 22201-3000 or call 888/400-NSTA (ext. 6782) and ask for form #562. Applications are available online at www.nsta.org/programs/barrick.shtml.

Middle School Science

The National Middle Level Science Teacher's Association and the Weekly Reader Corporation will award $2,500 to an outstanding teacher who now teaches students in grades 5-9.

The Vincent J. Marteka, Jr. Award for Creative Science Teaching honors the former managing editor of *Current Science* and is presented annually at NSTA's national convention. Deadline: November 15.

For additional information and guidelines, contact Carol Zimmerman at 203/705-3415. Send E-mail to Czimmerman@weeklyreader.com.

Or contact Hector Ibarra, Awards, 1940 Rohret Ct., S.W., Iowa City, IA 52240, E-mail: hector-ibarra@uiowa.edu. *Current Science* and *Weekly Reader* can be found on the Web at www.weeklyreader.com.

Reading

The International Reading Association sponsors two awards to honor reading teachers. The first, the $1,000 Eleanor M. Johnson Award, goes to an outstanding elementary reading or language arts classroom teacher.

The second, the $1,000 Nila Banton Smith Award, goes to a middle or secondary classroom teacher or reading specialist who has made an outstanding contribution in helping kids become more proficient readers.

Deadline for nominations for both awards: November 15. For more information, contact the International Reading Association, P.O. Box 8139, Newark, DE, 19714-8139, 302/731-1600. Send E-mail to Mary Cash at exec@reading.org.

Contests

Graphic Design

Middle and high school students can enter a contest based on Turner Network Television's CRUSADE—a sci-fi adventure series about a 23rd-century world threatened by a deadly virus.

Individual students or groups compete to create the best storyboard depicting a scene and related story using CRUSADE-related graphics, art, and characters. Grants of $1,500 will be awarded to the 10 schools with the best entries. The contest, available by Internet and CD-ROM, runs from January to May.

Contest rules and regulations, directions, curriculum connections, CRUSADE clip art, graphics, and more will be listed at http://tnt.turner.com and on the CD-ROM beginning in December. For more on other Turner Learning resources, call 800/344-6219 or visit http://learning.turner.com.

Germ Art

The Lever 2000 Anti-Bacterial Germ Cadets Contest invites children ages 7-10 to draw a picture of a germ and describe in 200 words or less how, as Germ Cadets, they would keep their families safe from germs.

The contest is part of Lever 2000's

Heads Up

nationwide "Smart Habits for a Healthy Life" program.

The grand-prize winner will receive a $10,000 savings bond, one first-prize winner will receive a $5,000 savings bond, and 10 runners-up will each receive $2,000 savings bonds. Deadline: February 26.

Contestants should print their name, address, phone number, and date of birth on an 8 1/2" x 11" sheet of paper and attach the sheet to the drawing and essay. Mail these to Lever 2000 Germ Cadets Contest, P.O. Box 1733, Young America, MN 55594-1733.

Web Winners

Homework Supersite

Homework Heaven, a collection of more than 150,000 educational resource links, is offering three megabytes of free Web space to every school in America. For details, go to www.homeworkheaven.com.

Cultural Arts

The Cultural Arts Resources for Teachers and Students (CARTS) site offers a host of information about folklore, art, anthropology, and more. Check out www.carts.org/index.html.

Web Service

NetSchool is a comprehensive Web service for K-12 teachers, offering everything from lesson plans and online workshops to training for beginners. Take a look at www.wnet.org/wnetschool.

Help for the Humanities

High school literature and history teachers have a new site tailor-made to their needs. TeacherServe, an online curriculum enrichment service from the National Humanities Center, will offer instructional guides developed by scholars and master high school teachers. Go to www.nhc.rtp.nc.us:8080/tserve/team.html.

Route 66

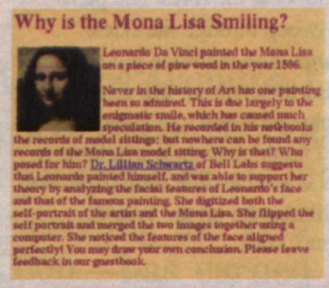
Need assistance launching a Web site? Web66, run by the University of Minnesota, offers help, plus a global listing of all schools and districts on the Web. Go to web66.coled.umn.edu/.

Free Materials

Here's a Web site listing books, software, posters, calendars, and coloring books that you can order free of charge online or through the mail. You'll also find links to freeware and shareware at www.compusmart.ab.ca/jmardres/free.html.

Mona Lisa's Secret

A group of American and Swedish high school students and teachers have put together a colorful and comprehensive site on Leonardo Da Vinci and his work. You'll find "Why is Mona Lisa Smiling?" at http://library.advanced.org/13681/data/davin2.shtml.


Why is the Mona Lisa Smiling?
Leonardo Da Vinci painted the Mona Lisa on a piece of pine wood in the year 1506.
Never in the history of Art has one painting been so admired. This is due largely to the enigmatic smile, which has caused much speculation. He recorded in his notebooks the records of model sittings; but nowhere can be found any records of the Mona Lisa model sitting. Why is that? Who posed for him? Dr. Lillian Schwartz of Bell Labs suggests that Leonardo painted himself, and was able to support her theory by analyzing the facial features of Leonardo's face and that of the famous painting. She digitized both the self-portrait of the artist and the Mona Lisa. She flipped the self portrait and merged the two images together using a computer. She noticed the features of the face aligned perfectly! You may draw your own conclusion. Please leave feedback in our guestbook.

Alternative Assessment

The National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Testing offers information on portfolio assessment, plus a database describing various states' alternative assessment practices. Go to www.cse.ucla.edu.

Discovering DNA

DNA: The Instruction Manual for All Life is a colorful, easy-to-read, and easy-to-understand site designed for younger Web surfers. Pay a visit to www.thetech.org/exhibits_events/online/genome/.

Armadillo

A partnership between the Houston Independent School District and the Center for Technology in Teaching and Learning at Rice University, Armadillo maintains one of the most comprehensive collections of school board policies on acceptable use, along with articles on censorship, filtering, and other leading issues. The Web site also contains resources covering networking projects, educational databases, lesson plans, grants, and links to resources by curriculum area. Go to http://chico.rice.edu/armadillo/Rice/.

Learning Technology

Review dozens of excellent essays, project reports, and lists of Internet resources on learning technology at www.ilt.columbia.edu/gen/index/index.html.

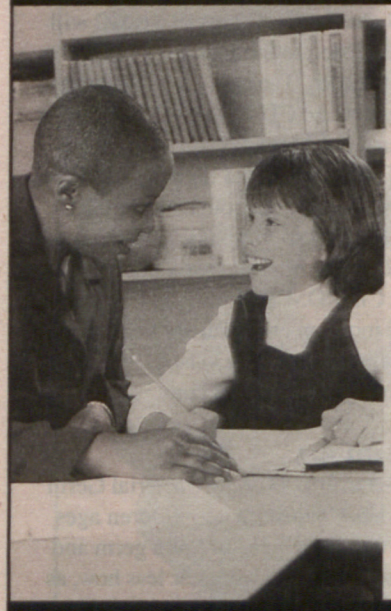
Ed Reform Research

TERC, a research center in Cambridge, Massachusetts, has compiled a Web site for articles, curriculum, and project reports on education reform organized by key topics. The page includes a guide on "Winding Your Way Through the World Wide Web." Go to http://ra.terc.edu/alliance/HubHome.html.

Beautiful Butterflies

The Atlas of North Dakota Butterflies offers colorful pictures and the basics on recording and displaying biology information. Students can click on the

Remember why you became a teacher? So do we.



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96 pp., 1998, Stock #2914-3-00-D,
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Heads Up

name of any butterfly to call up a page of basic facts and a map of states where the particular species can be found. Go to www.homeworkcentral.com/toplinks/6.html.

Constant Math Help

Favorite Mathematical Constants stores formulas and more on math topics like Zero, One, Pythagorus's constant and the Golden mean, number theory, and analytical inequalities. Click on a constant to find a page of formulas and comments.

The site includes a great illustration of the Fibonacci number sequence, plus more math graphics. Go to www.homeworkcentral.com/toplinks/5.html.

Award Winners

Time Warner Winners

Time Warner Cable's annual prizes for outstanding classroom work, the National Teacher Awards, were given in June.

A crystal apple sculpture, $1,000, and a trip to the award ceremony in Washington, D.C., went to the winning teachers, two dozen of whom are NEA members.

They are:

- Lecanto Primary, Tampa, Florida: Linda Ferrara, Karen Stofcheck, and Bianca Curtis.
- Milwee Middle, Longwood, Florida: Esther Ott, Pam Sabia, Elaine O'Neal, Carol Unterreiner, Nancy Martin, and Kathleen James.
- East Somerville Community School, Somerville, Massachusetts: Helen Mooney, Brenda McDonnell, and Deborah Pacino.
- Tippecanoe Elementary School for the Humanities, Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Mary Widen and Mary Jakubiak.
- North Rowan Middle School, Charlotte, North Carolina: Kathleen McCabe, Christine Stamper, and Mitchell Bennett.
- Detention Center School, Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Gail Salentine and Karen Olson.
- Zippel Elementary, Presque Isle, Maine: Jennifer York.
- Walker International Middle, Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Sandra Ruesink.
- Winter Hill Community School, Somerville, Massachusetts: Linda Walsh and Nancy Mulligan.
- Parsons High, Parsons, Kansas: Linda Potter.

AAUW Fellows

Ten of the public school teachers selected as Teacher Fellows by the American Association of University Women are NEA members.

The project proposals submitted by this year's fellows include mother-daughter math classes, personal Web page design classes, and a school-based environmental center.

The NEA members receiving fellowships this year are: Lisa Mesple from Boulder, Colorado; Patricia Colburn from Caro, Michigan; Joan Priddy from Vicksburg, Mississippi; Loretta Buddendeck from Dayton, Ohio; Susan Decker from Hot Springs, South Dakota; Patty Flowers from Humboldt, Tennessee; Andrea Cantu from Port Aransas, Texas; Meshelle Smith from Ogden, Utah; and Carolyn Ealy and Carol Reiners from Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Looking for Ways To Involve Parents?

You Can Get Help from NEA!

Here are 6 resources to get you started:

- "Parents as Partners" and "Parental Involvement," TeacherTV videotapes. Call (800) 229-4200, ext. 28 for more information and to order.
- "Putting Kids First," a School Stories videotape. Call (800) 229-4200, ext. 28 for more information and to order.
- "Building Parent Partnerships," an NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Book. Call (800) 229-4200, ext. 28 for more information and to order.
- "Pocket Guide to Partnerships," booklet. Call (800) 229-4200, ext. 28 for more information and to order.
- FREE Works4Me Classroom Tips Library, NEA's Web area devoted to helping educators help each other. Hundreds of tips! Turn your Web browser to http://www.nea.org/helpfrom/growing/works4me/library.html.
- FREE Tools You Can Use, printable documents to help parents and teachers work together for student success. Practical and approachable. Turn your Web browser to http://www.nea.org/helpfrom/connecting/tools/.

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About you

Name

Address

City | State | Zip

Home Phone ( ) | Business Phone ( )

Social Security Number | Date of Birth

Mother's Maiden Name (For identification only)

About your finances

Employer | Position

Years There | Annual Salary $

Other Income* $ | Source

*Alimony, child support, or separate maintenance income need not be revealed if you do not wish it considered as a basis for repayment.

Residence: ❑ Own ❑ Buying ❑ Rent ❑ Other

Monthly Payment $

Request for additional card

Name of Authorized User | Relationship

*I have read this application and everything I have stated in it is true. MBNA America Bank, N.A. (MBNA) is authorized to check my credit, employment history or any other information and to report to others such information and credit experience with me. If I do not qualify for the NEA *Platinum Plus* account, I will automatically be considered for the NEA School Days account. I understand that the acceptance or use of any card issued will be subject to the terms of this application and the Credit Card Agreement that will be sent with the card, and agree to be responsible for all charges incurred according to such terms. I am at least 18 years of age. I consent to and authorize MBNA America Bank, N.A. and MBNA's affiliates to monitor and/or record my telephone conversations with any of their representatives to better ensure quality service. I accept that MBNA may, at its discretion, periodically consider any account for an automatic upgrade. **Information about me or my account may be shared among MBNA Corp. and its subsidiaries for marketing or administrative purposes. I may prohibit such sharing of information, other than information pertaining solely to transactions or experiences between me and MBNA (or its subsidiaries), by writing to MBNA at P.O. Box 15342, Wilmington, DE and including my name, address, home phone number and the applicable MBNA account number(s).**

X *Signature | Date

Annual Fee	None.
†Annual Percentage Rate (APR)	NEA *Platinum Plus* account: 14.99% for purchases; NEA School Days account: 15.6% for purchases; each APR may vary.
Variable-Rate Information	Your APR may vary. The APR is determined by adding a margin to the U.S. Prime Rate as published in *The Wall Street Journal* on the 15th of March, June, September, and December. For the NEA *Platinum Plus* account, the margin is 6.49 percentage points, for the NEA School Days account the margin is 7.1 percentage points. On June 15, 1998 the U.S. Prime Rate was 8.5%.
Grace Period for Repayment of Balances for Purchases	At least 25 days from statement closing date.
Method of Computing the Balance for Purchases	Average daily balance (including new transactions).
Transaction Fee for Purchases	Transaction fee for the purchase of wire transfers, money orders, bets, lottery tickets, and casino gaming chips: 2% of each such purchase; $2 minimum, $10 maximum.
Transaction Fee for Cash Advances and Fees for Paying Late or Exceeding the Credit Limit	Transaction fee for Bank and ATM cash advances: 2% of each cash advance; $2 minimum, $10 maximum. Transaction fee for credit card cash advance checks: 1% of each cash advance; $2 minimum, $10 maximum. Late Payment Fee: $15. Over-the-Credit-Limit Fee: $15.

†The current promotional APR offer for cash advance checks and balance transfers made with either account is 3.9% through your first four statement closing dates commencing the month after your account is opened. Thereafter, the APR will vary according to the Variable-Rate information appearing at left, and will apply to all new and outstanding cash advance balances (consisting of cash advance check and balance transfer transactions). The current indexed APR for cash advance checks and balance transfers is 14.99% for the NEA *Platinum Plus* account, or 15.6% for the NEA School Days account, each APR may vary. Cash advances cannot be used to pay off or pay down any MBNA® issued account. **MBNA may allocate your payments to balances (including new transactions) with lower APRs before balances with higher APRs. Cash advances obtained through a Bank or ATM transaction are not eligible for the promotional 3.9% APR offer.**

††If your application is approved with a credit line of less than $5,500, you will receive an NEA School Days Credit Card. NEA School Days Card Customer benefits differ from those available with the NEA *Platinum Plus* account, e.g., Year-end summary of charges and MasterPurchase Protection are not available and maximum Common Carrier Travel Accident Insurance is up to $300,000. Certain restrictions apply to these and other benefits as described in the benefits brochures which are sent soon after your account is opened.

The NEA is not involved in the credit decision process. Absolutely NO membership dues are used to market this program. All applications will be subject to a confidential standard review by MBNA America.

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In the Light Lane

What the Plus Sign Means

During a trivia game, I asked my first graders, "What does the plus sign mean?"

One quiet girl immediately raised her hand, beaming, sure of the answer.

I called on her, proud that she would know this at the beginning of first grade.

"It means you're pregnant," she replied.

Tanya Triebensee
Cascade, Wisconsin

I read *The Tortoise and the Hare* to my first graders, and they loved it. When I explained that it was an Aesop's fable, they asked if I had any others. Delighted, I brought in a book of Aesop's fables from home.

Before reading, I explained that these stories were thousands of years old.

"Oh," nodded one little girl. "Is that why the book looks so torn and dirty?"

Kevin Evans
Sonoma, California

I often get amusing answers to questions about *Romeo and Juliet*. One of the funniest was in response to the question, "Where did Friar Lawrence want to hide Juliet after Romeo's death?"

A freshman answered, "At a nun's convention."

Karen Watts
Dundee, Michigan

During a discussion of voting rights for women, I mentioned that my mother "is an alien."

The entire sixth grade class was stunned, and some laughed. Only one student realized that I meant simply that my mother is not a U.S. citizen. She is a British subject, living in the United States.

Hilary White
Corvallis, Oregon

A second grade girl came into the school office a little after 3 p.m. —she had missed her bus. She tried calling her mom at home, but there wasn't any answer.

We asked if there was someone else she could call, and she said yes, her grandmother. She took a piece of paper out of her bookbag and proceeded to dial. However, she seemed to be dialing a lot of numbers.

When I asked why, she explained, "I'm calling my grandmother in Puerto Rico, and she'll call my mom and tell her I missed my bus."

Mary Leone
North Brunswick, New Jersey

To introduce a unit on simple machines, I asked the kids what tools or machines would help in building a house. They came up with an impressive list, with everything from wheelbarrows to hammers.

"I said 'How long were you a band instructor'?"

One excited young man suggested "tobacco." The class and I couldn't quite figure out how tobacco helped in building.

Luckily, he was more than happy to explain: "The back part is for digging, and the front part is for scooping."

I finally realized he was talking about a *backhoe*.

Lisa Mattson
Lead, South Dakota

My kindergartners were discussing the movie *Titanic* when one child said, "I know what happened—the Titanium hit an icebrick and shrank!"

Paula Dickerson
Byers, Colorado

I asked my eighth grade students to save their papers on the pros and cons of school uniforms in their computer folders.

Later, when I was going through one student's folder to grade the assignment, I burst out laughing. She had labeled it "Frozen Cons."

Deborah Anderson
Griffith, Indiana

At recess, a few of my kindergarten girls came over and told me, "There's a boy in the girls' bathroom."

I went to the bathroom and peeked inside, but no one was there. The girls then pointed to the toilet and shouted, "See? The seat is up!"

Vicki Torcisi
San Diego, California

One morning while getting ready for school, I accidentally nicked my nose while shaving. I arrived at school with a Band-aid on my nose, which caught the eye of my curious sixth grade class.

As I was taking attendance, a student asked me, "Mr. Bauer, what happened to your nose?"

I simply replied that I had cut it while shaving.

Surprised, the student remarked, "Wow, you have to shave your nose, too?"

David Bauer
Annapolis, Maryland

In my first year of teaching, I had a rather challenging class, and one day they had been particularly argumentative with each other.

I decided to discuss strategies they could use to resolve their conflicts. One of the buzzwords I shared was "stalemate," as an example of what happens when people don't work toward a common solution.

At the end of my glorious speech, I asked the students to relay back to me what I'd said.

"Now, what again is a stalemate?" I asked.

One eager child offered, "Is that when the husband or wife can't have children?"

Michelle Gowan
Hosford, Florida

From the Stacks

I was teaching my fourth grade class about the philosophy section of the library when I pointed out, "This is the section where you can find books about how man thinks about the world around him."

One of my students asked, "Mrs. Goulart, do they have any books about how *women* think?"

Carol Goulart
Griswold, Connecticut

As a school library media specialist for six years, I've heard all types of requests for books from students. My new aide, on the other hand, is just discovering how funny kids can be.

Recently, a first grade boy asked her for a book about turkeys. She used the computer to locate a title and headed for the shelf.

A quick glance at the book told her it wasn't what the student wanted.

"This won't work," she told him. "This is about the country of Turkey."

The young man's reply? "A country turkey is okay—I live in the country!"

Peggy Golden
Oakley, Kansas

My second grade class was listening to the librarian describe certain sections of the shelved books.

She had arrived at the sports section and was mentioning a few sports heroes when she named Tiger Woods.

One of my more sophisticated girls commented very matter-of-factly, "Oh, my mom's been there."

Aleta Matteson
Auburn, Washington

Got Laughs?

■ Have a funny school story, anecdote, or vignette you'd like to share with other NEA members? You can send contributions to "In the Light Lane," *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036. Fax: 202/822-7206. Send E-mail to neatoday@nea.org.

■ Want a classroom chuckle delivered to your E-mail box once a week? Subscribe to the new "In the Light Lane" mailing list. Just send an E-mail to **join-lightlane@list.nea.org** (no subject or message needed).

People

Striking Traditional Chords

Some play the *erhu*, a two-stringed violin, or the *yue qin*, a three-stringed, moon-shaped guitar. Others play the *di zi*, a bamboo flute, or *da gu*, a drum.

California teacher **Sherlyn Chew**'s students are learning Chinese music on traditional instruments—and, through notes and chords, many are connecting to the past, playing songs their parents and grandparents remember.

Trained in classical Chinese music and opera, Chew came to Lincoln Elementary School, in Oakland's Chinatown, as a bilingual teacher.

Four years ago, when her former music teacher died, Chew had the chance to buy from his estate the 30 traditional instruments he brought to the United States decades ago from Taipei. She put up her own money from a teaching award and raised the rest.

At the time, Lincoln Elementary had no music program—"not even a choir," Chew says.

Now, she spends her days teaching music to all 700 students.

"All the children at Lincoln are learning to read notes and play an instrument, not just Chinese music, but Western music too—even R&B," she says.

The best of Chew's students get to perform in the school's Purple Bamboo Orchestra.

"Bamboo is purple when it's very young and tender, and each stalk supports the next to be strong enough to endure the winter," Chew explains.

Chew encourages her students to be like the bamboo—strong and supportive.

"I want them to have character, be forgiving, become useful human beings, and make positive contributions to their communities," she says.

Josè Villegas

Hollywood High

Michael Floyd teaches students the history, customs, and culture of another era—but he delivers his lessons from behind the camera, not in front of the class.

Seven years ago, Floyd, a teacher at Indiana's Elmhurst High School, transformed a small television studio into Elmhurst Cinema Productions.

Now he and his students research, write, produce, and market full-length feature films. Their work has been seen on five continents.

In May, Floyd and his students premiered their latest *oeuvre*, *Pirates in Paradise*, a two-hour historical comedy of Spanish Main pirates in a high-seas adventure, shot on location in Florida, Michigan, and Indiana.

The film features a cast of 250, including professional actors, parents, and students from 40 schools.

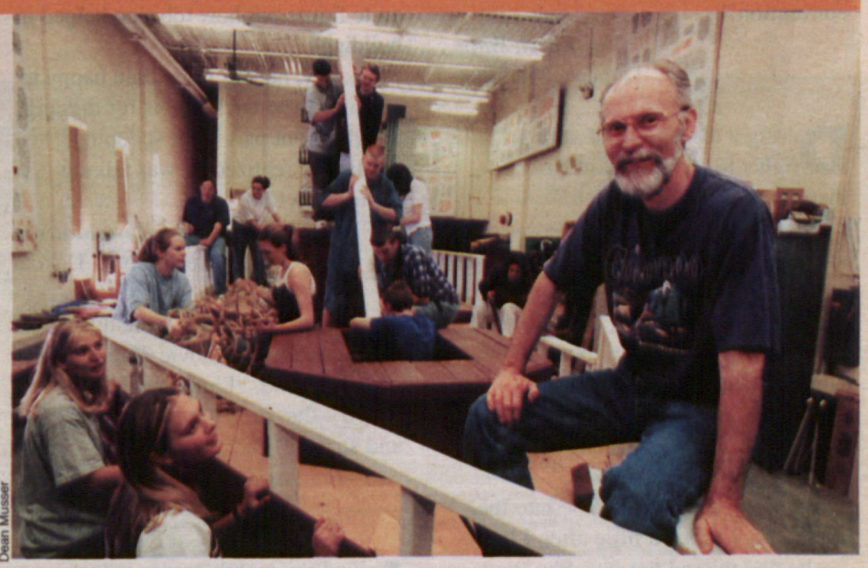
"We have students doing things they've never done before," says Floyd, who serves as director and producer—and writes the grants that cover production costs. "The list of jobs the kids do takes up four pages single-spaced.

"They experience every aspect of creating a movie, from building the set to sewing costumes," he continues.

Students worked on *Pirates* for 14 months—including 72 out of the 79 days of their summer vacation.

"It gives students a tremendous sense of satisfaction," Floyd says. "We're making education come alive."

And, over the years, experience on the set has helped students break into jobs at local TV stations—and some have even made it to Broadway.



Dean Musser

Eric DiNovo

And Tyler, Too!

Tyler wouldn't wake up. It wasn't until the carbon monoxide detector sounded a second time that the 70-pound dog, a huskie-chow mix, stirred.

To get her out, West Virginia teacher **Sue Luterick** had to drag the dog from their home. Firefighters later told her that if she and Tyler had remained in the house much longer, they would have died.

This summer, West Virginia Governor Cecil Underwood signed into law the "Tyler Bill," which requires carbon monoxide detectors in any new building with a fuel-burning source.

The bill's authors? Students in Luterick's and fellow teacher Donna Shumaker's fifth grade classes at Whitehorn Elementary School.

Following the incident in her home, Luterick contacted her representative, now state senator Homer Ball, who encouraged her to draft legislation. The students, upset over Luterick and Tyler's close call, were eager to pitch in.

"Tyler's like a neighborhood pet," Luterick explains.

After much research—and help from Ball, who offered to sponsor the legislation—the students submitted the "Tyler Bill" to the West Virginia Senate. The fifth graders were present when the Senate and House passed the bill and when the governor signed it.

The students learned that "if there's a need in your community, there's a way to fix it," Luterick says. Jumping into the legislative process made even the shiest students feel confident and smart.

"They've gained such self-esteem," she notes.

Luterick remembers an impressed senator remarking, "These children cannot vote, yet they took it upon themselves to make a difference."

But that's no surprise to Luterick.

"Never underestimate the power of children," she says.

Supplying Smiles

Stationed in Bosnia last year with the Army National Guard, NEA Student member **John Kinnaman** saw first-hand the toll war had taken on education. Schools had been rebuilt, but not restocked—and educators were desperate for classroom basics.

So Kinnaman asked family and friends to chip in by sending him a shoebox of school supplies. His dad, Delaware educator Jack Kinnaman, took the request and ran with it—straight to the Delaware State Education Association's Retired Council.

The Council quickly adopted the "Shoebox of Hope" program—and other state retired councils joined in, as did NEA's retired and student organizations.

"Folks went hog-wild," says the younger Kinnaman, back at college in Georgia this fall. "It turned out to be much bigger than I ever imagined."

How big? Bosnian educators and students received a whopping 650 shoeboxes filled with 60,000 pencils, 20,000 pens, 50,000 crayons, 1,200 sticks of chalk—and one lunch box.

NEA's Student Program honored Kinnaman with its first Carol Stowe Humanitarian Award this summer.

"I had the easy job," he shrugs. "I had the luxury of seeing the smiles on the kids' faces when I handed out the boxes."

Degree of Hardship

Oklahoma history teacher **Linda Arnett** has a history of her own with some of her students at Fort Gibson Middle School. They know her from her days as a custodian at their elementary school.

A teacher since 1996 and a custodian for 14 years before that, Arnett had always dreamed of going to college. She became interested in teaching after leading Sunday school and watching faculty colleagues at Fort Gibson Elementary.

Don Wheeler

After her husband fell ill in 1989, her need for a bigger salary finally prompted Arnett, at 40, to pursue a bachelor's degree.

When she became a full-time student, Arnett did her custodial work in the evenings.

"In the morning I got on a roller coaster, and I couldn't get off the ride until 10:45 at night," she says.

Harder than her hectic schedule, though, was spending so much time away from her husband. He died in 1996, but not before Arnett had moved them into a more comfortable house, thanks to her teacher's salary.

"I loved being a custodian because I enjoyed the people I worked with," Arnett says. But the switch to teaching has been a good one.

"I don't regret all the sleepless nights," she says. "Education has brought me to a place where I am very happy."

Money

Getting Started

How much money do I need to get started as an investor?

Fifty bucks. Many fund companies will open a mutual fund account for you if you agree to deposit as little as $50 each month—or even each quarter.

This is what's known as an automatic investment plan. You must arrange to have the money deducted from either your paycheck or your bank account and deposited directly into the mutual fund.

These funds are designed for people who don't have a great deal of money to invest, but many affluent, sophisticated investors use them as well.

That's because automatic investment plans help establish a discipline of "paying yourself first," or setting aside money for future goals before you turn your attention to groceries and the rent.

In addition, investing the same amount of money at regular intervals, regardless of market price, makes use of a strategy that professionals call "dollar cost averaging."

Investors who do this tend to pay less per share over time than those who purchase shares in blocks. That's because the same $50 buys more shares when the fund's price is down, and less when it's up.

When left to our own devices, most of us tend to buy a fund when it's "hot" and trading at its peak price, and then dump it when the price sags.

Most good no-load fund companies—or those that do not charge a commission—offer an automatic investment program. To set one up, call the company for an application.

Did You Know?

. . . that the NEA Member Benefits *Smart Living News* may be the best magazine you never have to subscribe to?

Smart Living News is an online publication that's available only through the NEA Member Benefits Web Site, at www.neamb.com.

This monthly magazine is packed full of helpful articles on investing, insurance, saving, borrowing, and taxes—plus updates on NEA Member Benefits programs and services.

Can You Afford...?

Getting a Handle on Your Budget

Stop paying as you go and start planning for that dream.

Suppose a friend calls this afternoon with a great opportunity: a killer ski weekend, a used sports car, a sale on audio equipment—you fill in the blank. How do you decide whether you can afford it right now?

Many Americans simply say, "Charge it!" That's the road to financial ruin, and you don't want to start down it.

Other people—even the most responsible—typically make such a financial decision based only on their income. They might think, "Let's see. I'll be getting a check for $950 next week. Can I squeeze $250 out of that?"

Of course, it's better to take the money out of your paycheck than to charge it. But even paying as you go can set up a hand-to-mouth existence that never allows you to take charge of your life, get ahead, and make plans.

The secret to a successful financial life is to create a budget. To make a budget work, you must build in both those things you *must* pay for—the necessities such as rent and toothpaste—and those things you *dream about*—hiking in Nepal, finishing a graduate degree, getting married.

To achieve your dreams, you'll need to spend less than you earn. That's called saving. One of the most important rules to learn about budgeting is to pay yourself first. You must allocate some money in your budget for long-term goals.

So before you even begin collecting records of your income and expenses, build these things into your budget:

- *A contribution to your retirement plan at work.* Decide how much you will contribute and make that the first entry on your list of expenses.
- *Repayment of credit cards and student loans.* Repaying loans is a form of saving—and it's typically your best first investment. If you pay off a loan with an 18 percent interest rate, you're earning a guaranteed 18 percent.

Here's the most efficient way to pay down your debt: Figure out the maximum you can afford to repay each month. Really stretch here. Now select the loan or credit card with the highest interest rate. Pay the minimums on all the others, and put everything extra you can afford to pay on that highest-rate loan. When that's repaid, move to the next-highest-rate loan.

- *An automatic investment plan.* You can arrange to have as little as $50 a month deducted from your bank account and deposited into a mutual fund account.

The best place to put this money is in the new Roth IRA. Contributions aren't tax deductible, but you need never pay tax on the earnings. You can tap into the money, too, provided you withdraw the contributions you made, not the earnings. That makes Roth the perfect "dream account."

Now for your budget. First, gather together your paycheck stubs and recent bills and receipts. Split your expenses into those that are fixed and those that are discretionary—entertainment, restaurants, gifts.

As you list items on your budget, scrutinize each one. Think about where you can trim spending to put more into your "dream fund."

While discretionary items are prime targets for cutbacks, necessities often have a way of expanding to meet—or exceed—your income. So take a hard look at what you're spending on groceries, transportation, and insurance to see where you might cut back.

Subtract expenses from income. If you have anything left over, add it to savings. Then look at your budget with an eye toward the future.

Think of budgeting as "trade-off spending." If you spend it today, you won't have it tomorrow for a vacation, a new home, or starting a family.

—Mary Rowland

Budget Worksheet

Total Fixed Expenses _____
(Housing, groceries, student loan repayment, transportation, Roth IRA, etc.)

Total Discretionary Expenses _____
(Vacation fund, entertainment, books, clothing, health club, etc.)

Total Monthly Expenses _____

Total Monthly Income _____

Balance _____
(Add it to your savings!)

Resources

Savings is an integral part of any sound financial plan. But for some people, it's harder to find a good savings vehicle than the money to save.

That's why NEA Member Benefits developed the NEA-Sponsored FDIC-Insured Money Market Account®, exclusively for NEA members.

Insured for up to $100,000 per depositor by the FDIC, the NEA Money Market Account offers an interest rate that frequently beats or matches the best money market rates available nationwide.

Plus, you earn an extra 1 percent on top of your high rate for the first 60 days your account is open.

For current interest rates, or to find out how you can open an NEA Money Market Account, call NEA Financial Services, toll-free, at 800/348-4632, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Monday-Friday, and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday, ET.

How Are You Doing?

Should You Retire Early?

It's tempting—but you have to be ready for life after your job.

Who:
Nancy Tankersley, age 56, Spanish teacher at Christian County High School in Hopkinsville, Kentucky

Financial Goal:
To retire before age 60 with ample financial resources

Game Plan:
"In Kentucky, you're eligible for retirement after 27 years of service, so I'm within about a year and a half of that," says Tankersley. She admits that she hasn't done a lot of formal planning, but she did open an individual retirement account (IRA) while contributions were still fully tax deductible, and she has been investing monthly in her employer's tax-deferred retirement savings plan.

Tankersley will also receive a pension through the Kentucky Teacher Retirement System, but she won't have any Social Security income—at least not initially.

"Teachers in Kentucky don't pay Social Security taxes, so they're not eligible for benefits," Tankersley explains. "I started teaching late, but before that I worked at a bank, where I accumulated some Social Security credits. I'll probably try to find a part-time job when I retire so that I can finally accumulate enough credits to be eligible for benefits."

Tankersley has been widowed for 15 years, but under a state law governing public employee participation in public retirement systems, she's prohibited from drawing on her husband's Social Security.

When she retires, Tankersley expects to help care for her parents, who are in their mid-80s—but she also plans to travel and organize trips for teachers and their students.

The Experts Say:
The key to successful early retirement—before age 60—is careful planning.

The first step is to decide whether you have the right temperament to retire early. The most contented early retirees are those who have lots of interests outside of work and whose identities are not wrapped up in their careers, say psychologists.

Once you decide you're cut out for early retirement, the next step is to determine whether you can swing it financially. You should expect your expenses during retirement to equal roughly 80 percent of your pre-retirement expenses, since spending on taxes, clothing, and commuting will drop.

Don't ignore inflation. Even at a modest 3 percent a year, it can cut the purchasing power of your income by a third in just 11 years.

Next, determine how much you can expect from Social Security and your pension. You can get an estimate of your monthly Social Security benefit by calling 800/772-1213 and requesting a Personal Earnings and Benefits Estimate Statement.

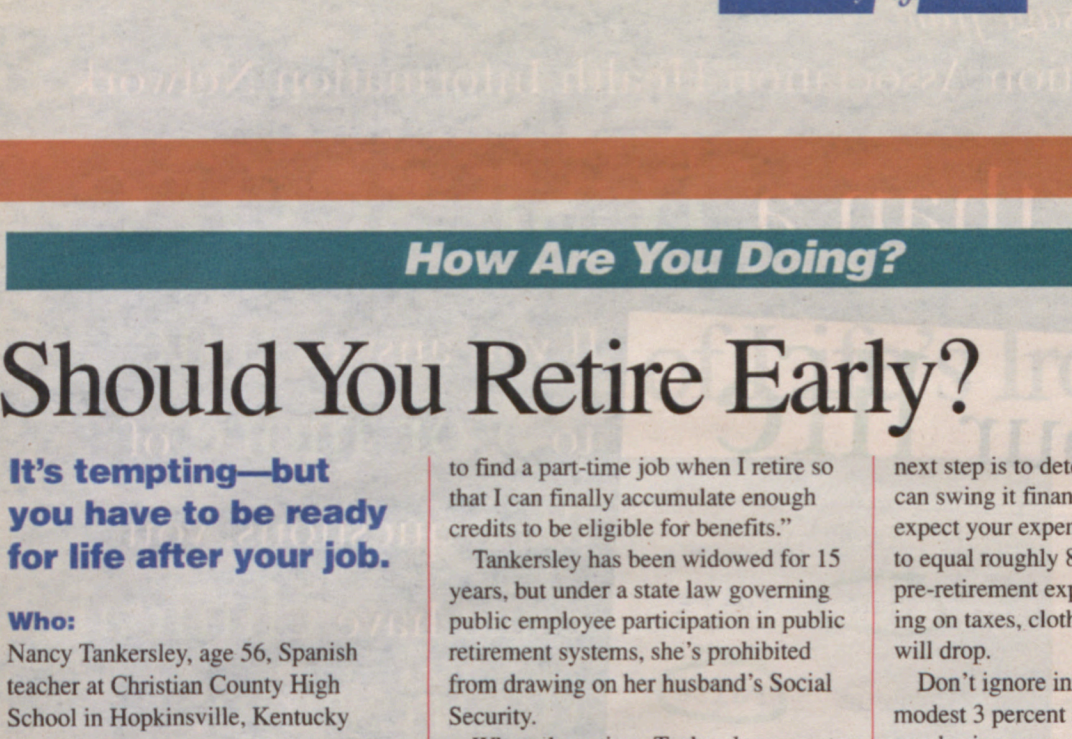
While Social Security replaces an average of 38 percent of pre-retirement income if you retire at age 65, the benefit drops with early retirement. For instance, retire at age 62, and your benefit will be about 20 percent less.

Don't assume that your pension and Social Security will take care of you during retirement. You'll almost certainly have to rely in part on income from investments.

One of the biggest mistakes early retirees make is putting too much of their money into bonds, CDs, and money-market funds, and not enough into growth stocks.

Most planners advise keeping at least 70 percent of your retirement funds in stock and stock funds in your 40s and 50 to 60 percent in your 50s. Start saving with an employer-sponsored, tax-deferred savings plan, such as a 403(b) plan.

Last but not least, try to obtain a comprehensive health insurance policy that will carry you from the day you retire until Medicare kicks in at age 65. Medical expenses are likely to consume 15 to 20 percent of your income during retirement.


Bob Bruck

Taking early retirement will give Kentucky educator Nancy Tankersley more time on the links—and more time for walks with Contessa, her sheltie.

Resources

After you've decided to take that "early-out package," the next question is, "What am I going to do now?"

Whether you decide to cruise the Mediterranean, take a cross-country tour, or just putter around the house, the NEA Accidental Death and Dismemberment Insurance Plan protects you and your family, at home or abroad, seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

With guaranteed enrollment, there are no required medical exams and no health questions to answer. And you can choose coverage levels up to $520,000.

For more information on the NEA AD&D Insurance Plan, call NEA Member Benefits at 800/637-4636, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Monday-Friday, or 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Saturday, ET.

Continuing On

I've always assumed that if I pull money out of my IRA before age 59½, I'll have to pay a penalty. But now I'm told that's not necessarily true. Are there ways you can withdraw money from an existing IRA penalty-free?

Under new tax laws that went into effect in January, there are at least six ways you can withdraw money from an IRA before age 59½ and avoid paying the 10 percent early-withdrawal penalty:

- To help purchase a first home for yourself, your spouse, a child, or a grandchild. You can withdraw up to $10,000 for this purpose, and you'll have to pay regular income tax on the amount you withdraw. The $10,000 maximum is a lifetime limit, so you could, for example, withdraw $5,000 twice to help one child and then another.
- To pay for qualified higher education—graduate or undergraduate courses—for yourself, a spouse, or any child or grandchild.
- To pay for medical expenses that exceed 7.5 percent of your adjusted gross income.
- To pay for medical insurance for you and your family—provided you've received unemployment compensation for at least 12 weeks first.
- If you've become permanently disabled.
- If the withdrawal is part of a set of annuity payments made over several years. Consult a financial professional to find out how much you can withdraw annually under this exception.

Retiring Soon?

Thinking about retirement? Don't forget that membership in NEA-Retired offers you a continuation of Association activism, benefits tailored to your needs as a retiree, plus workshops, conferences, and volunteer opportunities.

You'll also receive *NEA Retired* magazine, a bimonthly publication covering Association news and the latest on Social Security, pension, and health issues—as well as feature articles on NEA-Retired members around the country.

Join now as a pre-retired member. Contact NEA-Retired, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036, 202/822-7149.

A mental wellness message from
The National Education Association Health Information Network

get more than a test score

get back your life

Persistent sad, anxious, or "empty" mood?	True	False
Sleeping too little or too much?	True	False
Changes in weight or appetite?	True	False
Loss of pleasure or interest in activities?	True	False
Feeling restless or irritable?	True	False
Persistent physical symptoms that don't respond to treatment?	True	False
Difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions?	True	False
Fatigue or loss of energy?	True	False
Feeling guilty, hopeless or worthless?	True	False
Thoughts of suicide or death?	True	False

If you experience five or more of the above symptoms for longer than two weeks see your doctor or other qualified mental health professional.

If you answer true to 5 or more of these questions, you could have clinical depression.

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A program of the National Mental Health Association

National Depression Screening Day®
is Thursday, October 8, 1998.

The Campaign on Clinical Depression is sponsored in part by an educational grant from Eli Lilly and Company

My Turn

Early Detection of Life's Ironies

A teacher battling breast cancer finds former students in the strangest places.

A wave of self-pity was about to sweep over me when I heard a fairly loud voice say, "Hey, Mrs. B!"

I'd been left temporarily alone at the receptionist's window in the oncology radiology department at St. John's Hospital, where I'd dutifully reported to consult with my doctor and schedule 36 radiation treatments for breast cancer.

I'd already gone through surgery and five of nine chemotherapy treatments. "What's next?" I thought with a sigh.

I turned around in the direction of the voice, expecting—however unlikely, given the circumstances—to see a former student. But I didn't recognize the young man.

"Who are you?" I asked, with a forced smile.

"You taught at Will Rogers School," the young man replied, "didn't you? Gordi Barba recognized you first. He was in your class. I'm Francisco de la Torre. I was never in your class, but you had all my brothers and sisters. Gordi and I are radiation therapists here."

I could hardly believe it. I'd been through so much already, and now my radiation therapists were going to be my former students.

"Well," I laughed, "soon you'll be seeing a lot of me. And I mean that in every possible sense."

The young man laughed and returned to work. I opened my calendar, turned to the receptionist, and scheduled 36 appointments.

As I wandered off to find my husband, I thought back to the meeting we'd had with the doctor earlier that morning. When he'd heard I was a teacher, he had spoken so respectfully and at such length about the importance of educators, about the widespread influence our work has on society at-large.

And here, right in his office, two students from the school where I'd taught second and third grade for 18 years were his radiation therapists. Can you believe that?

When I found my husband, I related the incident to him and we laughed. We tried to think of some funny one-liners I could slip into hospital conversations.

Bob Fiha, Jr.

Diane Brunson, below with her two former students, is back on the job, teaching in the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District in California. She can be reached at DBrun5139@aol.com.

"How about, 'If I ever kept you in at recess to do your homework, now is not the time to retaliate,'" I suggested.

Daily radiation for nearly two months allowed me to reestablish contact with these two fine young men. They told me how they'd gotten their radiation certificates in Utah while working in California. They told me about their families, activities with their children, and about their siblings' families and careers.

As they went about their important daily work, I felt privileged to observe how compassionately and professionally they treated all their patients.

What a pleasure it was for me to see Francisco play Santa Claus at the hospital Christmas party and to tell all who'd listen that he'd been a student at the school where I taught way back when.

What a surprise to see Gordi's mother again after so many years. I'd had so many parent-teacher conferences with her in the past, and now, as she accompanied a friend going through radiation, I had the chance to hear what had become of so many former students from her neighborhood.

What a delight to be surrounded by so many people connected to me by more than mere professional obligation.

What a blessing to remember my time in the "radiation chamber" fondly, to think of it as an upbeat leg of the journey to reclaim my health.

The experience brought something full circle in my life as a teacher.

It's easy to say that our students are our future. But it's another thing entirely to know that your future, if there is to be one, is now completely in their capable, caring hands.

I know how lucky I am—to be alive and to be a teacher.

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. For more information, contact your local American Cancer Society or call 800/ACS-2345. For a list of materials and resources for planning local early detection activities, contact the NEA Health Information Network at 800/718-8387.

You Said It

Bill Fischer, editor

In just a few weeks, *USA Today* will announce the first "All-USA Teacher Teams"—60 teachers in all, 20 each on the first, second, and third teams.

Late this past summer, I had the opportunity to be one of the 12 judges who selected these historic teams of education all-stars.

Our judging group included experienced educators from every level of education, and we knew what we wanted to do. We wanted to find a group of teachers who could represent the education profession as exemplary teachers. And that's just what we found.

The all-star teachers we selected aren't the "best teachers" in America. No contest process can ever hope to identify the "best." The all-stars we selected are simply wonderful teachers—men and women who can make America proud of what's going on in our nation's classrooms.

The best testimonials about the work of these teachers came, naturally enough, from their students. I was amazed to see how many students wrote that they still go back to see their former teachers for advice and counsel, often years and years after they've sat in the teachers' classes.

The all-star applications were also full of letters of support from parents. Many of these letters explained how a certain teacher had stepped in to rescue a failing son or daughter at a time when it seemed like everyone else in the world had just given up on the child.

Deciding which teachers to select as all-stars was tough but rewarding work. The teachers nominated ranged in age from their early 20s to their late 60s. Some had just a short career in teaching, others more than 30 years of experience.

A majority of the all-stars are NEA members, and, in the months to come, you'll be reading many of their stories here in *NEA Today*. In the meantime, check the October 15 *USA Today*. It'll feature a rundown of the entire first team. Some good reading about great people!

Bill Fischer

Meet

Want Dr. Ruth talking to your students about sex? Check out her book for kids.

It's hard to say who has more questions about sex, adults or kids. These days, pop psych icon Dr. Ruth has answers for both audiences.

You may know that Ruth Westheimer escaped the Holocaust by moving to a Swiss orphanage at age 10, lost her family in the war, and fought in the Israeli army.

You may not know that she started her career as a kindergarten teacher, has a doctorate in education, and has recently written two books—one on sex, one on grandparents—for kids.

Westheimer met recently with NEA Today*'s Stefanie Weiss while at a conference in Washington, D.C.*

Scott Suchman

Dr. Ruth Westheimer

Birds, Bees & Details

No disrespect intended, but why should kids listen to a nice old lady like you?

I know. I'm going to be 70. I'm a grandmother. I have an accent. I'm old-fashioned and square. I believe in love. I believe in marriage.

What has helped me is that Jewish tradition says a lesson taught with humor is a lesson retained. That helps me a great deal, because teaching human sexuality, you have to use humor. Not jokes. I couldn't tell you a joke. But humor.

Also, in the Jewish tradition, it's said that if you stand on the shoulders of giants, you can see further—and advance something. That's important to me. I'm only 4' 7". So I certainly need those giants, like Masters and Johnson, who went ahead of me.

The "Dr." in Dr. Ruth is for a doctorate in education, not medicine, right?

Yes. I consider myself primarily an educator. I'm a therapist, but that's in addition. I'm not a politician. I'm not a theologian. I'm an educator, talking about the need for sexual literacy.

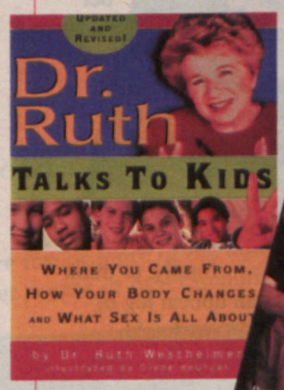
What is "sexual literacy"?

What I mean by sexual literacy is to know everything there is to be known.

Isn't *everything* a bit much for most kids?

When I say "all there is to be known," I mean age-appropriate, of course. I believe in explicitness. But I also believe it depends on the child.

When a five-year-old asks, "Where did I come from?" I don't need that mother or father to sit down and talk about Caesarean sections. That would not be appropriate.



They should say that when a father and mother get together, they love each other, and the penis is placed inside the vagina. They should be very explicit. Not just the biology, not just the anatomy. I mean the feelings, too.

Will parents tolerate teachers being "explicit"?

I would never say to a teacher to do anything in a classroom without it being okayed by the principal, by the powers that be. To get parents to understand, teachers must hold seminars for them in the evening and tell them what they intend to do in the classroom.

Teachers must be super careful. I suggest putting out a shoebox and letting the children ask questions, no names. I also suggest never asking personal questions.

What else will help sex ed teachers succeed?

You have to be well-trained. You have to be sensitive to different religious backgrounds, socioeconomic groups, racial groups—all of those differences people come with.

You have to be askable—that's a term that sex educator Sol Gordon coined, and I like it. I believe you have to be askable teachers, so people can feel like they can ask their questions.

And, finally, you have to be like the turtle. The turtle only moves when it sticks its neck out.

What do you tell teenagers thinking about having sex?

I say don't rush it. Don't do it because everybody else does it. Make sure you wait until that inner voice of yours says it's right. Now, I don't want people to engage in sex too early. But if teens decide they're going to be sexually active, I say go and be protected.

Should schools distribute condoms?

I want to see health clinics in junior highs and high schools, not sex clinics. Health clinics can give out contraceptives when indicated, but in private. I don't want that tenth grader, Betsy, if she goes in for condoms, the whole school has to know. Maybe she went in there because she had a headache. And I don't want school employees to hand out condoms as if they were balloons. They're not!

Can you scare kids away from early sex?

Scare techniques don't work. They've been tried. It has to be education. You have to say, "You must know your partner. Because that person, if they have had sexual experiences, might bring other things into that bed."

Should boys and girls learn about sex together?

Yes. In the olden days, they talked about menstruation only with the girls and nocturnal emissions only with the guys. But we live in a world of men and women. A girl has to know about nocturnal emission, and a guy has to know about menstruation. But don't forget to put that shoebox there for anonymous questions.

Can sex ed be separated from values and morality?

I don't teach morality, but I couldn't teach sexuality without having that undertone of responsibility: Don't hurt anybody. Make sure that everything is with consent.

Resources

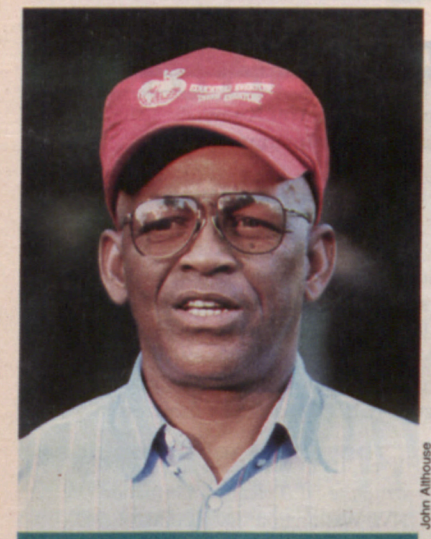
■ *Dr. Ruth Talks to Kids: Where You Came From, How Your Body Changes, and What Sex Is All About.* Ruth Westheimer. Simon & Schuster, 96 pp., $5.99. On the Web: www.simonandschuster.com/.

■ *Dr. Ruth Talks About Grandparents: Advice for Kids on Making the Most of a Special Relationship.* Ruth Westheimer and Pierre Lehu. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 104 pp., $15, 800/330-8477.

■ Got a question for Dr. Ruth? Ask her on the Web at **www.drruth.com**. If it's a parenting question, post it for her at **www.parenttime.com**.

Debate

Should Seat Belts Be Mandatory on School Buses?



John Althouse

Yes

Ozzie Hill, Jr., drives a school bus for the Camp Lejeune Department of Defense Dependent Schools in North Carolina. A former NEA local affiliate president, he's now the Human and Civil Rights Coordinator for the Lejeune Education Support Association. He can be reached at ozdehill@gibralter.net.

As a school bus driver, my job is to see to it that children go from home to school and school to home as safely as possible. I can do that job best when I'm driving a well-maintained school bus, equipped with seat belts for every child.

I drive a school bus for preschoolers that's equipped with seat belts and car seats. In North Carolina, three-year-olds riding the bus to preschool sit in a secured car seat. Four- and five-year-olds riding the bus to preschool wear seat belts, too.

I like to think that riding on my bus is one of the most constructive, daily safety lessons that many of these preschoolers will ever have.

I teach my young riders that they must always buckle up while riding in a bus, car, or plane. That's a terrific message to send to so many kids at such an early age.

But I worry that all this great training is for naught.

When these kids reach the age of six, they no longer have to wear their seat belts. In fact, the buses they ride to elementary school don't even have seat belts. Where's the consistency here? What kind of message are we sending?

A school bus is long and deep. A major accident can cause children to be tossed from one end of the bus to the other. So can braking for a stray animal, swerving to avoid an obstacle in the road, or simply stopping short.

We all know that seat belts are intended to keep people in their seats, to prevent the kind of injuries that might result when kids are tossed around like salad. And we know that seat belts keep kids from standing or jumping up and distracting the driver. So what are we waiting for?

Some say it's human nature to wait for tragedy to strike before making unpleasant change. It took a long time to mandate bike helmets, for example. And it can take forever to get a stop light at a busy intersection.

But we don't have forever. We're talking about children and safety. Truth be told, parents, educators, and lawmakers should have insisted years ago that school buses be equipped with seat belts.

Some say the cost of putting seat belts on every single American school bus is just too high. But the cost of maintaining the status quo could be higher.

If one child's life can be saved, if one child can be spared from injury, then it will have been well worth the cost of installation.

I used to be against seat belts. But, as the laws became tougher, I settled down—and buckled up. Now I feel uneasy and unsafe without one wrapped around me.

When I forget to put my seat belt on, my own children remind me. Fastening seat belts is second nature to them now. And that's how it should be.

Kids are learning, but we need to do our part, too. We need to model correct behavior. We need to drive as carefully as we can—and we need to make sure other drivers know how to drive safely when school buses are in their midst.

We need to teach students how to get on and off our buses safely. And we need to do whatever it takes to get seat belts on our buses. I don't want my charges—or yours—to be the ones who could have been saved, if only they'd been wearing their seat belts.

No

Debbie Moore, a school bus driver for 10 years, has served as president, vice-president, and now as secretary of the Gwinnett Bus Drivers Association in Georgia. In 1993, the Georgia Association of Educators named Moore its ESP of the Year. She can be reached at dm9165@bellsouth.net.

School buses don't have seat belts for good reasons. They're unnecessary, and worse, they're hazardous.

School buses are designed specifically for safety:

- The body of the bus is made of layers of reinforced steel, forming a protective cage around the passengers.
- The floor of the bus is raised so that, in the event of a collision, most vehicles would strike the bus underneath the actual student seating area.
- The fuel tank is enclosed with a steel cage, and the seats are covered in flame-resistant kevlar.
- Side windows, roof hatches, emergency doors, and pop-out windows offer numerous emergency exits.
- But the best protection for school bus riders is the bus's internal "compartmentalization" design.

Bus seats have high backs and are placed close together at an angle. If there's a sudden stop or impact, students slide forward, and their chests and abdomens hit the seat in front of them. If the students on the bus are wearing lap belts, their foreheads hit the seat in front of them, transferring the force to their spinal columns, and causing more serious injuries.

School buses designed for maximum safety don't need seat belts—and most drivers don't want them. Why? Most drivers think seat belts on buses pose a significant safety hazard.

- First, a seat belt can be a deadly weapon. The buckle can be used to strike another person. The belt itself can be used to choke someone.
- Second, in the event of an accident, seat belts can trap students on board. Fires can engulf buses in flames and smoke in roughly three minutes. The delay in unbuckling a jammed seat belt could be the difference between life and death.

Not only could small fingers have problems unbuckling in an emergency, but dangling seat belts could become a danger to exiting students, causing them to trip.

- Third, it would be nearly impossible for bus drivers to make sure that all students are buckled up properly at all times. The special needs students on the bus I drive now wear their seat belts so loosely that, in the event of an accident, the kids would slide out, and the seat belts would wind up around their necks.

Right now, school buses are the safest form of transportation on the road. In 1995-96, there were 16 pupils killed on school buses nationwide—out of 24.5 million students riding the buses every day over a distance of 5 billion miles.

Most bus accidents that year were collisions, which school buses are built to withstand with minimum injury to passengers. And most bus fatalities occur outside of the bus, in loading and unloading zones.

Even one student death is one too many, but seat belts aren't the answer. We can improve school bus safety by strictly enforcing the no-pass law, putting an aide on every bus, improving the training we offer drivers, and getting more support from parents and administrators when there are discipline problems on buses.

But by far the best way we can boost bus safety is to boost bus safety instruction. By teaching students how to behave on and around buses, we can do more to prevent injuries and deaths than seat belts could ever do.

What's Your Opinion?

Should seat belts be mandatory on school buses?

To vote, visit our Web site at **www.nea.org/neatoday** and see the results instantly.

Should schools sell cola companies exclusive rights?

The tally on this Debate question from the last issue of *NEA Today:*

26% Yes **74% No**

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Certification

Pilot Test Opportunities

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is currently developing portfolio entries for three new certicates.

We are looking for teachers of **Exceptional Needs** (students ages birth -18+), **English as a New Language** (students ages 3 - 18+) and **Vocational Educational** (students ages 11-18+). From one portfolio entry from one of the certificate areas, as a pilot participant, you will be asked to videotape a lesson and/or collect student work, and write an analysis about your teaching. Start date is **January 15, 1999** with completion by **March 15, 1999.**

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For further information contact Juana Betancourt at 800/779-3339, ext. 5409. E-mail jbetancourt@ets.org.

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Announcements

The ESP Information System

NEA has created the **ESP System** to gather information about key education support personnel issues from many sources and quickly put that information into the hands of members and staff who need it most.

The system is interactive and will continue to evolve, guided by its users. Right now there are four different components: written materials, such as the **ESP Data Book,** and a manual on strategies for combating privatization of ESP jobs, an **ESP section online**, and **Internet mailing list** where staff and members can discuss issues, and a Web site at www.nea.org/esp

NEA's job is to act as a 'stage manager,' making sure that everything is working smoothly and responding to the needs our members.

Health Resources

Millions of Children You Know Don't Have Health Insurance

Approximately **11 million** children in the United States are **uninsured** - and most likely are not getting the health care they need. Without insurance, children do not receive the preventive care they need to pinpoint future health problems, common childhood illnesses never get treated, and more serious illnesses can be life-threatening.

Many children are eligible for comprehensive coverage through the Medicare Program. For many children not eligible through Medicaid, low and no-cost insurance coverage is now available as a result of the Child Health Insurance Program (CHIP), enacted by Congress in August 1997.

For more information on CHIP efforts in your state and eligibility, E-mail kidhealth@aol.com or write the NEA Health Information Network at 1201 16th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036.

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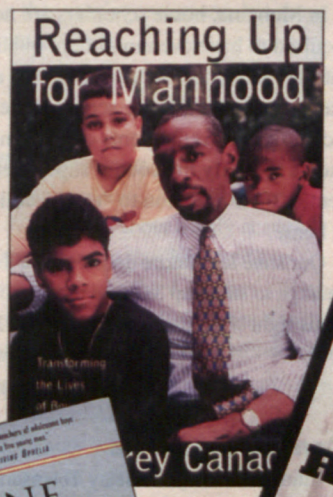
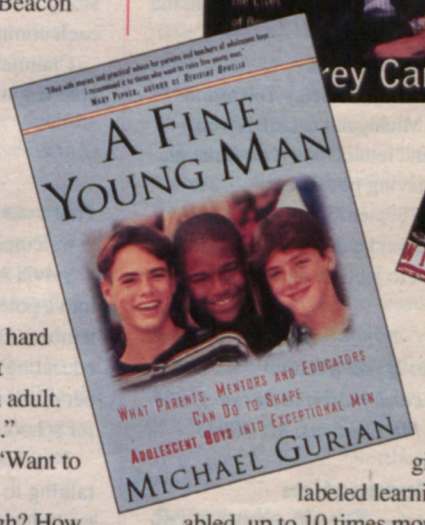
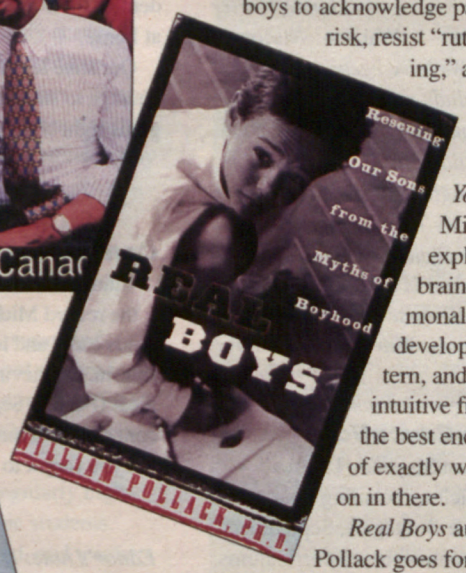
Books

Behind 'Masculinity's Mask'

What can you learn from the trio of new books about boys?




A Fine Young Man
What Parents, Mentors and Educators Can Do to Shape Adolescent Boys into Exceptional Men
Michael Gurian



Real Boys
Rescuing Our Sons from the Myths of Boyhood. William Pollack. Random House, 447 pp., $24.95.

Reaching Up for Manhood
Transforming the Lives of Boys in America. Geoffrey Canada. Beacon Press, 160 pp., $22.

A Fine Young Man
What Parents, Mentors, and Educators Can Do to Shape Adolescent Boys into Exceptional Men. Michael Gurian. Putnam Publishing Group, 300 pp., $24.95.

Every educator knows how hard it can be sometimes to get adolescent boys to talk—to an adult.

"How're you doing?" "Fine." "What's wrong?" "Nothing." "Want to talk about it?" "No."

So how do you break through? How do you find out why a boy's grades are slipping or why he's giving you such a hard time? How do you you get behind what William Pollack calls "the mask of masculinity"?

"Why bother?" meets a brutally simple answer in all three books: Boys are twice as likely as girls to be labeled learning disabled, up to 10 times more likely to be diagnosed with ADD, and far more likely to be discipline problems, dropouts, and homicide statistics.

Parents afraid for their sons may want to devour all three books. For educators, each has a different value.

Easily the most moving of the three, Geoffrey Canada's *Reaching Up for Manhood* is more memoir than manual. He lets his readers know exactly what it's like to grow up male, Black, and poor. In chapters about sex, violence, and family, he pushes adults to teach boys to acknowledge pain, evaluate risk, resist "ruthless marketing," and know the value of hard work.

A Fine Young Man by Michael Gurian explains boys' brain and hormonal systems, their developmental pattern, and their counterintuitive fragility. It's the best encyclopedia yet of exactly what's going on in there.

Real Boys author William Pollack goes for the sound bite—"gender straitjackets," "Boy Code," and "most of our schools are failing our boys." Push beyond that, and you'll learn about boys' learning styles, discipline without understanding, and the "unintentional disconnect between teachers and boys." He's also got great chapters on boys dealing with divorce and depression.

Read any or all three books—while you're babysitting the boys in detention.

—Stefanie Weiss

NEA Professional Library Top 10 Bestseller List

1 Bright Ideas: A Pocket Mentor for Beginning Teachers. Mary Clement. ($4.50) This checklist reveals the secrets of surviving the first year of teaching. (#2153-3-00-FB)

2 Pitfalls and Potholes: A Checklist for Avoiding Common Mistakes of Beginning Teachers. Barbara A. Murray and Kenneth T. Murray. ($4.50) Loaded with practical advice, this Checklist Series booklet for beginning teachers is a great gift for that new colleague down the hall. (#2151-7-00-FB)

3 The Discipline Checklist: Advice from 60 Successful Elementary Teachers. Ken Kosier. ($4.50) Sixty top teachers share their secrets of classroom management and suggestions for motivating today's students. (#2152-5-00-FB)

4 Countdown to the First Day of School. Leo M. Schell & Paul Burden. ($4.50) A must-have checklist for every beginning elementary school teacher. (#2150-9-00-FB)

5 Peer Support: Teachers Mentoring Teachers. NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. ($9.95) Who benefits when teachers reach out to their colleagues for advice and support? Students! (#2913-5-00-FB)

6 MegaSkills Moments for Teachers. Dorothy Rich. ($9.95) This book shows what you can do to turn everyday problem situations into opportunities for personal and professional growth. (#2006-5-00-FB)

7 Moving to the Block: Getting Ready to Teach in Extended Periods of Learning Time. Fleming, Olenn, Schoenstein, and Eineder. ($4.50) This compact book answers your questions about block scheduling. (#2159-2-00-FB)

8 Inspiring Discipline: A Practical Guide for Today's Classrooms. Merrill Harmin. ($10.95) This practical book delivers with strategies you can put to use immediately in your classroom. (#2950-X-00-FB)

9 How To Get Grants and Free Stuff. NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. ($9.95) Master grant writers share practical tips and winning strategies for getting grants and free stuff for your classroom. (#2914-3-00-FB)

10 The First Year Teacher: Teaching with Confidence (K-8). Bosch & Kersey. ($14.95) The ultimate first-year teacher's handbook. Includes time-saving ideas, tips for working with parents, and more. (#1862-1-00-FB)

This month's rankings are based on last month's sales for all books published by the NEA Professional Library, a service for all 2.3 million NEA members financed solely by the sale of books and other professional development materials to the education community.

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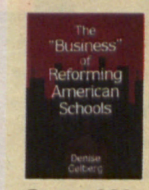
The prices listed are NEA member prices. A shipping/handling charge will be added to each order.

Books by NEA Members

The Law of Gravity
Dennis Morgan Cottrell. *Wyrick & Company, 329 pp., $17.56 plus $4.50 s&h, 800/227-5898.* Told from a lively and intimate first-person perspective, this novel explores a teenager's moral and intellectual development after fleeing his abusive father.



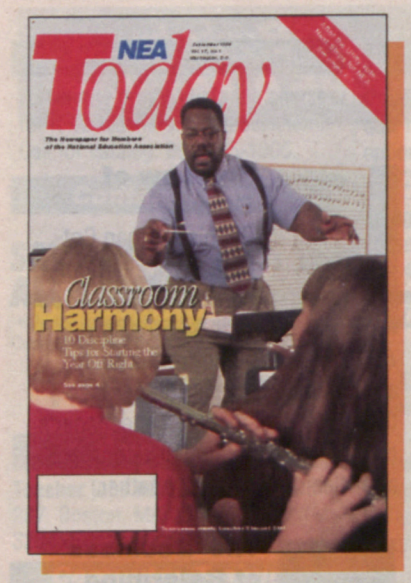
The 'Business' of Reforming American Schools
Denise Gelberg. *State University of New York Press, 329 pp., $21.95 plus $3.50 s&h, 800/666-2211.* An insightful historical analysis of the relationship between the business community and school reform in 20th century America—how history has repeated itself and how things have changed.

City Terrace Field Manual
Sesshu Foster. *Kaya, 176 pp., $12.95 plus $3 s&h, 800/338-BOOK.* An eclectic collection of vivid prose poems convey impressions of life in the area of East Los Angeles called City Terrace.

Cloud House
Nancy Covert Smith and Tamara Beech. *Avon Books, 182 pp., $3.99 plus $1.50 s&h, 800/223-0690.* In this novel for middle schoolers, you'll meet Nell Valentine, who turns a boring summer in a fictional California gold mining town into one filled with ghosts, magic, and mystery.

Our Principal Is a Werewolf
Alvin Cunningham with illustrator Lina Marie Evensen. *Kabel Publishers, 62 pp., $19.50 plus $3.50 s&h to 11225 Huntover Dr., Rockville, MD 20852-3613, 301/468-6463.* Poems and illustrations about school, including "Stick Your Nose in A Gym Shoe," "My Rump Gets Sore," and, of course, "Our Principal Is A Werewolf," all told from the students' perspective.

Letters



Multiculturalism's 'Angel'

Thank you, NEA, for your continued support of the issues surrounding multiculturalism and diversity in America. I really appreciated your interview with James Banks, the angel of multiculturalism and director of the Center for Multicultural Education at the University of Washington (Innovators, September).

Banks's five dimensions of multiculturalism—identified with precision in your article—should be shared with every school employee in America. By welcoming multiculturalism, we prepare each and every school community for the next century.

Job well done!

Paula Fordham
Ft. McCoy, Florida

Sign the Contract

I was impressed by the discipline contract Tennessee music teacher Vincent Dial has his students and parents sign (Cover story, September). How can I get in touch with Dial for more details?

And I'd also like to contact Jon-Paul Roden to get more information about his PowerPoint demonstration of classroom rules (Bits & Bytes, September). How can I reach him?

John Butler
Caledonia, Michigan

Editor's note: You can reach Vincent Dial at Liberty Bell Middle School in Johnson City, Tennessee, at 423/461-1621. Or you can write to him at 2409 Stewart St., Johnson City, TN 37601. You can send E-mail to Jon-Paul Roden at jproden@ix.netcom.com.

ESP Extra

In my house, we get two copies of *NEA Today*—one for my husband, a teacher, and one for me, a library aide. Imagine my surprise when I noticed that our two copies of the September issue had different covers—and mine had a "new ESP Extra section inside."

It's a very nice section! But why is it only available to ESP members? Aren't we all one unit working together? And don't teachers have more to learn from reading the stories that we ESP members already know well?

If NEA truly wants to make support employees feel a part of this union, it needs to stop separating us from teacher members. *NEA Today* can help, and I look forward to change in this direction.

Linda Harter
Wabeno, Wisconsin

Editor's note: We have been and will continue to include coverage of education support employees throughout NEA Today. *In addition, this year, instead of publishing a single, annual magazine for ESP members, we'll be publishing a regular, special section inserted in* NEA Today. ESP Extra! *is mailed only to ESP members, but all those who'd like to read it can find it on the Web at www.nea.org/neatoday.*

Adventure Education

Over the past 30 years, I've read many articles, including your recent one (Students & Strategies, September), about how adventure-based curriculums can help the troubled student.

As a physical education teacher, I've developed a challenge program for K-5 students that other educators may want to learn more about.

The Jefferson School Challenge Course provides all the benefits of rock-climbing and ropes courses, while teaching problem-solving skills and boosting self-esteem. It allows all students, regardless of age or sex, to progress through seven levels of difficulty at their own pace.

I make the program available to all students—not just troubled ones—in an attempt to provide all students with ways to become higher achievers.

For more information, visit my Web page at www.tiac.net/users/dumais.

Dave Dumais
Holden, Massachusetts

Home Schooling

I was pleased to see such a strong statement on home schooling (NEA 1998-99 Resolutions, September).

In Montana, home schoolers are not required to have even minimum qualifications, and students are not held to any standards. In fact, home schoolers here face no state requirements of any kind, except to notify the county superintendent of their intention to "teach" children at home.

Our state legislature doesn't have the courage to stand up to those in the religious right who resist controls of any kind.

Ron Osborn
Hamilton, Montana

Cards and Letters

I think your story on Betsy Townsend—the retired Michigan custodian who sends cards and letters to at least three ill, shut-in, or grieving people a day—was great (People, September). I'd like to contact her to send a donation or a card, but you forgot to include an address.

Joan Sleeth
Billings, Montana

Editor's note: If you'd like to send Betsy Townsend a card, mail it to her at 35964 Larchwood, Mt. Clemens, MI 48043.

NCATE Connection

I understand that the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education is looking for people to help evaluate schools that teach future teachers. I'd like to get involved. Who should I contact?

Ed Broad
East Meadow, New York

Editor's note: You can write to NCATE at 2010 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Suite 500, Washington, DC 20036. The phone number: 202/466-7496.

Channel One Defended

I disagree with Marianne Manilov, co-founder of the Center for Commercial-Free Public Education, who says Channel One is a horrible waste of taxpayer money (Innovators, September).

My seventh graders watch Channel One each day. It's an important link to current events, especially geography. This week, for example, my students have seen paramilitary troops fight in poor areas in Ireland. They've seen widespread floods in China, the tragedy of a plane crash in Canada, and the economic and political crisis in Russia.

The two minutes of commercials aren't a waste of time, either. I use the time to drop some questions about the news and get the kids' responses. And, when we study propaganda, we can study the ads to see what sort of appeal each commercial is striving for.

Channel One is one of the most valuable resources we have.

Matthew Bean
Nashville, Tennessee

Pursue Parents

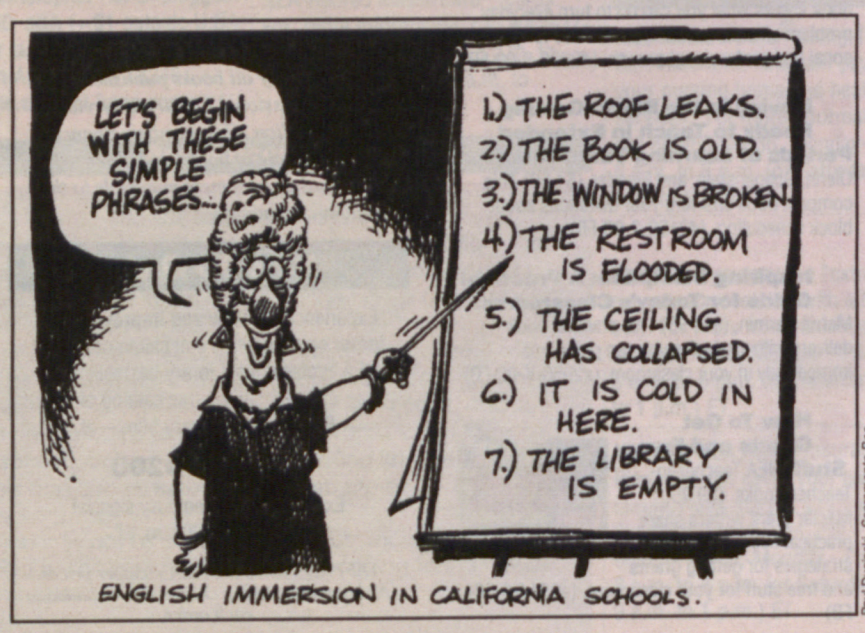
I welcome the efforts of Cornel West and Sylvia Ann Hewlett to organize parents into a potent, political force (Meet, September). But I'd like to see NEA begin educating the public about the huge number of parents who don't prepare their kids for school.

I'm talking about simple things like talking to their children, reading to them each day, teaching them to count and identify colors—common-sense parental responsibilities too often left undone.

School districts like ours typically enroll kindergartners who are years behind the typical five-year-old. We play catch-up from that time on, yet all the public sees are low test scores.

Before *I* go through any more "competency" testing, I'd love to teach a classroom full of youngsters whose *parents* have passed a competency test.

E. Romano
Yucca Valley, California


LET'S BEGIN WITH THESE SIMPLE PHRASES...
1.) THE ROOF LEAKS.
2.) THE BOOK IS OLD.
3.) THE WINDOW IS BROKEN.
4.) THE RESTROOM IS FLOODED.
5.) THE CEILING HAS COLLAPSED.
6.) IT IS COLD IN HERE.
7.) THE LIBRARY IS EMPTY.
ENGLISH IMMERSION IN CALIFORNIA SCHOOLS.
Paul Duginski, Sacramento Bee

An Amendment, Please

After enduring a year of one-sided stories about the possible NEA-AFT merger, I feel compelled to point out a blatant inaccuracy in your coverage of the vote (Newsmakers, September).

You state that Judy Schaubach of Minnesota introduced the new business item to reaffirm merger goals. This is not true. Bob Haisman of Illinois originally introduced the item. Subsequently he amended his own language, which was then amended by Schaubach.

At best, this was a collaborative effort, not the sole effort of Judy Schaubach.

Susan Moskos
Berkeley, Illinois

Junk Food Junkies

You asked, "Should schools sell cola companies exclusive rights?" (Debate, September). The real question is:

"How can a school include a health science course in the curriculum on the one hand and push junk food on the other?"

Food machines at schools should include nutritious fruits and vegetables, not liquids laced with sugar and caffeine.

Gerald Lunderville
Long Beach, California

Bye-bye Bilingual

This fall, California teachers are busy disbanding bilingual education and, thanks to the passage of Proposition 227 in June, replacing it with a form of immersion that includes a mere one year of English instruction, followed by placement in all-English classrooms.

The new statute assumes that most students will be able, in one year, to make the drastic leap from their native tongue to English. I've lived in southern California all my life, and I have memories of similar assumptions.

In the 1940s, there was no accommodation for students who didn't speak English. All educators could do was place the children in the lowest reading groups.

At the end of sixth grade, three Hispanic classmates of mine were still in the lowest reading group, showing no signs of progress. Most of the kids thought they were ignorant or retarded. It's my guess that they eventually dropped out of school, and who could blame them?

I can't defend the failures of bilingual education in other schools. I only know what I see at my own school—fully certified bilingual teachers teaching happy children.

These kids aren't confused or discouraged. They're not retarded, nor does anyone think they are. They've been able to maintain their basic skills through the medium of Spanish and are ready to begin mainstreaming by third grade.

Properly implemented, bilingual education works. But we have made the deadly mistake of forgetting the past and not learning from it. Sink or swim never worked, and it never will.

Valerie Adler
Torrance, California

Majority Rules?

I think NEA disregards the values and opinions of a sizable portion of its members when it euphemistically promotes abortion by supporting "reproductive freedom" (NEA Resolutions, September).

There is a possibility that the majority of your members consider a fetus already human. Given that thinking, NEA's goal of promoting and protecting human and civil rights should apply to the baby in utero as well as to the mom.

But why not just leave the item out of the resolutions? NEA's tendency to take liberal stances on politically volatile items makes recruitment extremely difficult and is therefore detrimental to the Association.

I commend the delegates for toning down this year's resolutions, but they need to do better.

Richard Emmel
Little Rock, Arkansas

Gifted Presence

Virtually nothing is ever written in *NEA Today* about highly academic students. It seems that NEA publications—and local school systems—always focus on the other end of the spectrum.

Public school employees wonder why the public is less and less supportive as time goes on. As a parent of a gifted child, I know why. My daughter will need to go to a private school to receive an appropriate education.

I've worked as both a parent and teacher in the public school system to improve matters, and I've made a difference. But it's been an inch of progress, with miles to go.

I urge *NEA Today* to regularly highlight outstanding academic students. They need to be celebrated, and teachers need to be reminded that they exist!

Gary Wilson
Northeast, Maryland

So What's New?

As an educator with 24 years of experience teaching all grades K-12 in Maine, New York, Japan, Korea, Germany, and now in Alaska, I wish to point out a fact well illustrated in your story on New Unionism (Cover story, May).

"To ensure student success at the reconstructed school," you write about changes in Colorado Springs, "CSEA is working with the district to provide funding, supplies, and additional staff."

Need I say, "Dah!"

If all American schools had proper funding, supplies, and additional staff, do I dare predict "success"?

Brian Koharian
Fort Yukon, Alaska

Let's Talk

Share your ideas, comments, and opinions with *NEA Today* in one of five ways:

- By mail: Write to Letters, NEA Today, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036
- Through the Web: Go to www.nea.org/neatoday and click on "Submit a Letter to the Editor"
- By E-mail: Write to neatoday@nea.org
- By FAX: 202/822-7206
- By Phone: 202/822-7201

Letters are edited for length and clarity.

A Letter from: Salt Lake City, Utah

A Teacher in the House?

By Lily Eskelsen

Last summer, I decided to run for Congress in Utah's 2nd Congressional District.

The decision wasn't an easy one. I thought about my sons, now 21 and 17, and my husband. I thought about the fifth graders who had already hugged me and told me that they wanted to be in my class next year. I thought about balancing the rigors of a campaign with my work on NEA's Executive Committee.

But there were certain things I didn't think about—fear, for one. Miss Madsen, who teaches third grade down the hall, asked me if I was scared. "Look at the power and the title and the wealth you'll be going up against," she said. "Aren't you shaking in your shoes?"

I told her that, no, I wasn't scared. After all, I had taken 127 12-year-olds to the zoo—and brought almost every one of them back.

NEA leaders understand the power of average citizens to make a difference. We expect our members to make that difference—not by possessing personal wealth or titles, but by understanding the connection between the future of this country and caring for its children.

I accept that power, and I accept that responsibility.

My first job out of high school was as a school lunch worker. I took the responsibility to make those kids actually want the peas and carrots.

When I became a kindergarten aide, I took the responsibility to make sure every child got a hug and a chance to talk to an adult who would listen with respect.

When I became a teacher, I took the responsibility of giving my students the chance to become powerful. We adopted a nursing home, ran blood drives, met with our attorney general about tobacco laws, and held press conferences about hunger. I taught my students how to make the world a better place.

And, since I never ask my students to do something I'm not prepared to do, I'm joining them by trying to become the teacher's voice in Congress that America so desperately needs.

People who work with children are the most practical people in the world. We don't have lofty, esoteric, hypothetical discussions about the future. When the bell rings, the future walks into our classrooms and takes a seat. I can tell you its name in alphabetical order. We look into the eyes of the future every day, and it makes us fighters, because we know—in real terms—what's at stake.

Every political decision affects my kids and their future. That's why it matters who's making those decisions. It matters what motivates them. It matters if they are people who make decisions crafted for the next election or for the next generation.

I've dedicated my life to helping others understand that children are the benchmark by which we must measure our decisions. Children challenge us to look to the future and find solutions today. Like every good teacher, I am up to that challenge.

As a mother, a teacher, and a citizen, I've committed my life to fighting for the American Dream. And that dream is not building your own home. It's building a future that's worthy of our kids.

I'm proud to have served America's children as a teacher. I'm proud to have served my colleagues who work in America's schools as a member of the NEA Executive Committee.

Now, I'm proud to offer my eyes, my voice, and my heart as a candidate for the United States Congress, to serve the American public and help guide the decisions that will chart this country's course into the next century.

It's an honor to have the support of the National Education Association and so many individual school employees around the country who have offered their help in sending Congress what it has needed for some time: A good sixth grade teacher.

Utah teacher and NEA Executive Committee member Lily Eskelsen is running for Congress. To voice support for or contribute to her campaign, contact Lily for Congress, 140 West 2100 South, Suite #102, Salt Lake City, UT 84115, 801/484-8112. Fax: 801/468-0695. E-mail: Lily4Cong@aol.com. On the Web: www.lily4congress.org.

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